A BRUSH WITH THE HALF-BREEDS.

RODNEY MERTON,

The Young Newspaper Scout.

A Story of the Riel Rebellion.

---

very scarce

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS book is written by the author in the belief that boys enjoy best those stories which are truest to real life in characters, plot and coloring. It has seemed to him that their interest in a "hero" who has the faults and limitations of "a good average boy," acting under environments of ordinary importance and probability, is keener than in an impossible prodigy of juvenile wisdom and courage who finds himself in a complex tangle of stupendous difficulties, from which he frees himself by a series of daring adventures sufficiently melodramic to appal the "heavy villain" in a third-rate tragedy.

The boy who has a single real adventure, in the usual juvenile acceptance of the term, is a rare exception, for in *outward* circumstance and perils most boyhoods are commonplace enough. What, then, shall be said of the books which picture their boy heroes as suffering from an epidemic—a veritible cholera-infantum—of material perils? Certainly they are not true pictures of boy life as an average, or even as an average of reasonable exceptions.

It is to be doubted whether the time has come when the mass of story-reading American boys can

be vitally and surely interested in a true picture of "average" boyhood; but the author does believe that boy readers are bright and keen enough to derive greater pleasure from the account of the struggles of a boy of only average qualities against odds and obstacles of reasonable number and difficulty, than from the narrative of the "adventures" of a boy of impossible virtues, triumphing over perils which, both in character and number, could in no human probability have surrounded one boy in ten-thousand.

The author does not imagine that he has given in the following pages a true picture of the vicissitudes of an average boyhood; but he hopes that the adventures of "The Young Newspaper Scout," are fairly representative of the character, perils and triumphs of the "average of exceptions" which lift the lives of frontier boys from the lines of uniform common place in which the careers of most boys are spent. He is at least confident that his readers will not find a single "situation" in the following story which is not justified by reasonable probability. More than that, he believes that the same justification of probability will apply to the story as a whole, both in the environments and situations with which Rodney found himself surrounded and in the action which they called forth.

Geneva, Ill. F. C.

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CHAPTER I.

IN DESPERATE STRAITS.

IT was almost sunset of an April day in 1885, when Rodney Merton came again in sight of Ft. Qu'Appelle, after the first nights of absence from home that he had ever experienced. He had left his mother's cabin early Monday morning and it was now Wednesday. His eyes brightened as he stopped in the middle of the dusty road and gazed at the little hamlet, with its old log fort surrounded by a high palisade, the new post of the Hudson Bay Company and a cluster of cabins.

Now that he was once more in sight of home—which he mentally declared had never "looked so good" to him before—he felt that he could afford to sit down and rest for a few minutes. This was a luxury which he had allowed himself but few times during the two day's tramp from Grenfell, a distance of thirty-five miles from Ft. Qu'Appelle. His coat was hung on the end of a stick, carried over his shoulder, and his calico shirt was dark and wet with perspiration along the lines of his buckskin suspenders and wherever it touched his heated body, for it was the first really warm day of the late spring.

As the boy turned out of the road and climed a

little knoll, which commanded a better view of the town, his steps were slow and dragging, and he frequently pressed his right hand upon his knee, as though his tired legs, which had become sore and aching with the long walk, were unequal to the task of carrying him to the summit of the rise.

Dropping upon the ground under the flickering shade of a Balm of Gilead, he stretched out at full length, and with an involuntary sigh of relief, pulled the smooth-worn visor of his home-made fur cap down over his eyes, and lay for a time in motionless repose.

Not until a kingfisher rattled his harsh challenge and dove, from the limb of a dead tree down into the still water of the Qu'Appelle river, did Rodney stir. The guilty terror in which he started up, just as the bird splashed into the water and rose with a small fish in its mouth, would have convicted him of having been asleep, even though he had not rubbed his eyes and yawned. Then he sat for a moment, with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, looking dreamily at the shimmering river and the little trading post where his whole life had been spent.

His return from this first solitary journey into the world seemed a greater event to him, after his three days absence, than home-coming from years of foreign travel has seemed to many an adult. He wondered what had happened while he had been away and what his mother and the boys about the fort would say to him.

If the object of his expedition to Grenfell had only proved successful he would have felt like a conquering hero, returning to his native town, ready to receive the admiration and the applause of the inhabitants.

But absolute and hopeless failure had been his lot and he felt like sneaking unnoticed around behind the fort and post to his mother's cabin, instead of taking the main street. He did not, however, long entertain this suggestion, for the thought of doing anything underhanded or sneaking went very much "against the grain" and made him suffer severely from remorse and self-contempt wherever he yielded to such an impulse.

After a few moments of gloomy meditation, Rodney aroused himself, drew from his pocket a Winnepeg paper and re-read, for the third time, the account of the Duck Lake massacre in which the Half Breeds and Indians had inaugurated the Riel Rebellion. It was a bloody protest against wrongs which bore heavily upon nearly every poor family in the Saskatchewan and Qu'Appelle Valleys, and especially upon Rodney Merton and his weary overworked mother.

Some years before, Thomas Merton, along with a few other hardy and courageous pioneers, had come to the valley and settled upon Government land, in the full faith that, by enduring the hardships and privations necessary in reclaiming the wilderness, he might secure a comfortable home for himself, in his old age and for his family. He and his companions

had, worked early and late in this hope, only to find, after fifteen years of unrelaxed struggle, that the Government still refused them the titles to their homesteads. Here Rodney had been born. He began early to share the hard labor and the privations of pioneering and had grown up to the age of fifteen. Discouragement, resulting from the conviction that they would never have their home "free," and the exposure to the extremes of the severe climate broke down Thomas Merton's courage and health. After a lingering illness, which had lasted through the winter, he died, leaving Mrs. Merton and Rodney to finish the hopeless struggle for a home as best they might.

During previous winters, Rodney had been under the instruction of the local priest and had made rapid advancement in studies of which most boys of his age knew little or nothing; but this fall he had been obliged by his father's illness to do almost a man's work. In addition to cutting the wood and doing all of the chores, he had managed to keep quite a successful string of traps in operation, and when he drew his pack of pelts on his hand-sled, down to the Hudson Bay post it seemed almost large enough to buy out the whole stock.

But as Leveque the local agent in charge, told him that there were forty dollars due the company from his father, after crediting up the furs, he went home with a heavy heart.

"We've got to pay it off some way, even if you have to work it out," his mother had said, in the

hopeless tone in which she had come to voice her few words.

"All right, Ma I'll do it if Leveque will take me in," Rodney had promptly replied. This was followed by offering his services to Leveque, who kept the boy during the busy season, until the family account was settled. Then he told Rodney that he did not need his help longer and that in the future Mrs. Merton would be obliged to pay for whatever supplies she wished to buy.

Hard times began in earnest after this dismissal, and it was by only the most patient industry and persistent watchfulness that Rodney contrived to keep his mother and himself in food. When the last hope of obtaining employment near home was gone, he had bravely set out to look for work of any kind in Grenfell.

Now he was returning, after having met with unvaried failures and rebuffs.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW HOPE.

AFTER thinking these matters all over again, Rodney picked up his coat and stick and again resumed his journey.

He had walked but a few rods when a boyish whoop burst from his lips at the sight of the tents of the regular troops, on the side of the river opposite the town, which had before been shut off from his view by a strip of timber.

As he approached past the old fort, he noticed that it was occupied.

A group of smaller boys were crowding about the entrance to the stockade and staring at the men inside.

"Who are they?" Rodney inquired of the spell-bound youngsters.

"Scouts!" was the whispered answer, from half a dozen of the awed half-breed children.

Not until then had he realized that he was in the presence of war. The fighting at Duck Lake had seemed very far off in the cold newspaper type. It made his blood leap to watch the scouts cleaning their "Snyders" and revolvers; and he found himself wishing that he might enlist with them.

But as he turned away from this fascinating sight

and continued his homeward walk the thought, which had not occurred to him while watching the scouts, flashed through his mind; they were his enemies, fighting to continue the oppression which had broken down his father and which promised to turn his mother and himself from the home for which his father sacrificed health and life itself. If he were to join either side it must be that of the settlers. He would talk it over with his mother that night. If he could only enlist as a drummer boy or "something of that kind," his pay would support his mother, and he might win promotion by his bravery. Then when the war was over and the followers of Riel were victorious, he would be given a position as captain of the mounted police. He was picturing to himself how he would look entering the through-train from the east, demanding satchel keys from unwilling passengers, and ordering his men to "go through" the baggage and search the suspicious characters for smuggled liquor and goods. He could even hear the imaginary clink of glass flasks as his subordinates dashed them out of the windows and shattered them upon the ground.

"*Look out!* Want to run right over a lot of us small folks!" good-naturedly exclaimed a genial loafer, whose tilted chair, in front of the post, Rodney had almost overturned in his heedless course.

Rodney blushed and stammered his apologies, while the hangers-on joined in the laugh.

"Well; what luck?" asked Leveque, who came to the door behind an out-going customer.

Rodney simply shook his head.

"Eh-ha! sorry!" meditatively grunted the agent, as Rodney passed on up the hill toward home, thinking that if Leveque were really very sorry he would give him work.

As Rodney came around the corner of the cabin, Mrs. Merton was dipping spoonfuls of yellow corn-meal dough from an old basin on to the board which lay in front of a populous hen coop, and stood watching the downy balls of chickenhood as they picked impotently at the wet meal in imitation of the coaxing mother hen, which set them a noisy and excited example.

She started at the sound of his quiet approach, pushed back her sun-bonnet, and smiled for almost the first time that he could remember since his father's death.

"Well; ma!" he exclaimed, as he came awkwardly and almost bashfully toward her, wondering whether or not she would kiss him. He was going to ask: "Did I scare you?" but he did not have time before she dropped the basin and spoon, and without saying a word kissed him impulsively.

There followed a moment of embarrassing silence, which was finally relieved by Rodney, as he picked up the fallen basin and rapped its edge, with a startling bang against the board in front of the coop.

"Well?" said his mother, in the hopeless tone which plainly implied "I know the worst has happened."

"No; I didn't get anything to do, ma. But I

guess it'll come out all right, somehow. Anyway they've had an awful fight at Duck Lake, and Riel's men cleaned ov' everything. I brought you a Winnipeg paper that's got all about it in."

Mrs. Merton looked at him in dazed astonishment, wondering what he could possibly mean by connecting the news of the bloody outbreak with the hope that their hard fortunes would finally mend.

"Have't you heard about it, yet? Why the old fort's full of scouts now."

"Yes, I heard they'd ben a fight, but I don't see what that's got to do with it," replied Mrs. Merton.

Seeing that the time was not yet ripe to discuss the daring project of joining the Rebels as a drummer boy, Rodney made no reply, but went to the spring to wash. Mrs. Merton quickly resumed her usual manner and said:

"Supper's ready—what they is of it."

The startling expression of affection into which Mrs. Merton's emotions had betrayed her, on seeing her boy safely home again and the hopeless and almost ironical suggestion in regard to the meager limitations of the supper affected the boy more keenly than any other words he had ever heard. The latter aroused him to the realization that they were in desperate need for the common necessities of life, while the caress awakened an intense and active love for his mother that he had not been conscious of before. A painful sense of the pitiful misery and loneliness of her life and the patient endurance with which she met each day of its weary

and hopeless continuance came over him. A new purpose and courage took possession of him. He would not only take heart himself and in some way keep her from want and get the homestead clear, but he would have courage for both her and himself and make her feel that she was going to be taken care of. As they sat down to supper Rodney said:

"Ma, don't you 'spose that Riel has scouts just the same as the Government has?"

"'Course. I sh'd think so, anyway. Don't the paper tell?" she answered, absently.

After a moment's reflection, she added:

"Why?"

"Oh! nothing;—only I just heard one of 'em telling old 'Two-cent' that the Government paid 'em five dollars a day and furnished their rifles an' rations."

"Goodness! Well, if Riel does that he might better take the money that it costs an' buy the settlers' claims for 'em, outright. He might a good deal better never have begun the fight, anyway. 'Taint no use, an' everybody'll be poorer an' worse off when it's over; an' there'll be more widows an' hungry children in these valleys than they is now. It would be a mercy all 'round, if Riel should be captured an' the whole thing ended before it goes any further."

This suggested a new line of thought to the young would-be Rebel scout and he said no more until the evening meal was finished and he picked up his hat from the door step.

"Ma! I'm going down by the fort. Mebby I can pick up some odd jobs or errands to do for the soldiers."

Mrs. Merton offered no objections to this, and he slipped out of the door and scampered down the hill to where the scouts were quartered.

His flying feet were left far behind by the speed of his thoughts. If his mother's view of the rebellion was right—and he had neve before thought to question the correctness of her moral judgment—it might be right to get some kind of a place with the government scouts, for if the rebellion was bound to end in defeat for the settlers, and it was a mercy to bring it to such an end as quickly as possible, why should it not be right for him to contribute to help bring about such an end by joining the government forces?

But against this line of reasoning came up the memory of his father, the injustice he had suffered, and the desperate resentment against such oppression, which had grown more bitter with every year of his life.

The boy's heart gave a quick leap at the inward question: If father were alive upon which side would he fight?

Rodney could not evade the answer: With Riel.

By the time he had joined the men and boys in front of the post, his mind was a confusion of conflicting theories, in which the thought of finding an errand to do was entirely lost. At one moment duty and honor seemed to forbid him, in spite of his

mother's hopeless view of the struggle, to do anything that might identify himself with those who had oppressed his father and neighbors, or to hinder the possible triumph of the settlers. Then the vivid recollection of his mother's words and of her present needs would fully justify to him the most active opposition to the Rebels of the Saskatchewan.

Without definitely settling the question, he resolved to ask old "Two-cent Tranquility," more about the scouts.

He found the shrewd old shoemaker at his bench, playing a lively tune upon the top of a scout's boot, with his pegging hammer, while his fingers performed that mysterious sleight by which the pegs seemed to flow from his bench, through his mouth into the awl holes in the tap.

Although the men, women and children of Ft. Qu'appelle, who did not habitually speak French unvaryingly, cheapened Toussaint Tranquilite's name into "Two-cent Tranquility," they held the old shoemaker in the highest esteem and regarded him as not only a marvel of shrewd, practical common sense, but second to the priest only in the wisdom of books. He was a kind of village premier or privy councilor for the majority of the inhabitants. His kindly and companionable nature, and his keen sense of fun extended his popularity to the children of the hamlet and made him the sharer of, perhaps, more of their secrets than any other adult person in the village.

He nodded to Rodney and jerked his hammer

out in the direction of a leather-bottomed stool, which Rodney took and waited until the cobbler's lips were released from the mechanical duty of holding pegs, and were set at liberty for conversation.

"Well, my son, did you find anything to do?" inquired the shoemaker, as he deftly "stropped" his thin, pliant knife-blade on the leather along the edge of his bench and proceeded to pare the edges of the tap.

"No, sir; nothing."

"Well, I wish you was a journeyman cobbler; so I do! I'd give you plenty to do while the soldiers are in camp here. Just look at that pile of boots to be patched! Then I've got three pairs of fine cavalry boots to make."

"But," he continued reflectively, as he rubbed the edges of the tap with a small swab dipped in a bottle of black stain; "it's a sorry thing all round! A sorry thing, my son! It'll only make a bad matter worse, for of course, every man who lives through the fighting will be deprived of his rights and property. No use for a man who has fought with Riel to stay round in these parts after this jig is over. He'll stand no chance for anything."

This put matters in a new light with the boy, who had not thought but what, if he should join Riel's forces and live through to see his side defeated, he might return to peace on the same ground that he had quitted it. This new consideration seemed almost to determine his future course, for he asked.

"How much did you say the Government pays those scouts?"

"Five dollars a day and found—all but their mount. That's a lot of money, son! Wish you could get a job like that for awhile."

"Do you know how old they have to be?" asked Rodney in a timid voice, as though he expected to be reproved for the audacity of the thought which his question would surely betray to the shoemaker.

"Twenty-one, of course. But you needn't think for a minute that your mother would let you join. She'd *starve* first."

This was what the boy had expected and he did not have the courage to press his inquiry directly in regard to the possibility of his securing a position as drummer-boy, but said:

"Don't you 'spose there is *something* that a boy could get to do for the scouts—something that mother might let me do?"

"Well, mebby. It wouldn't do any hurt to hang around there a little. You might pick up chances to run errands now and then. Those fellows are mighty free with their money. It comes easy and goes easy. Now you take those boots down to Cap'n. French an' if he don't give you a tip, I'll make it right with you myself. They're paid for."

Rodney took the boots by their straps and went down towards the old fort with the elation which comes of settled purpose.

He was admitted within the palisade but was compelled to wait for Captain French, who was

engaged inside the fort. A group of scouts were lounging about an open fire, story-telling, joking, laughing and smoking, as though their prospective dangers were mere bug-a-boos, and scouting the best sport in the world.

He listened intently to what they were saying and finally ventured nearer the group, that he might miss nothing of their talk.

"Found a man yet? I should say not!" exclaimed a young man who did not seem to have exactly a soldierly air. "An' I've got to get hold of some sort of fellow who knows enough about this valley to carry my dispatches without getting lost or captured. Every able-bodied man around here is either with the rebels or getting a scout's pay from the government. I' spose I could pick up a fairly good man if the paper would allow me to spend that price; but it won't go over half that at the outside. If the fighting begins right away, I'll have to take up with half a man if I can't get a whole one. If I could pick up some fellow who has hunted and trapped along this river till he knows every crook and turn of it and every road and town in the valley, he'd be worth money to me, and I'd put in something out of my own pocket, for I've just got a commission for some special correspondence for the London papers, an' I'd have this fellow act as a private scout as well as to carry my dispatches to the wires."

Just then Captain French came up to Rodney, glanced sharply at the bottoms of the boots and with a "Well, my lad," handed out a quarter.

The delight which would otherwise have filled Rodney's mind at this bit of good luck was dimmed by the excitement of alternating hopes and fears which confronted him, as he considered the possibility of securing the position of private scout for the newspaper man.

He would have hung about the campfire until the group broke up, in the hope that he might find just the right opportunity to speak for the place, but he did not dare remain, now that his business was done.

He resolved to hasten back to the shoemaker, put the matter before him, and ask his aid in securing the position. When he reached the shop he found it closed. "Two-cent" was across the way, in front of the post, giving the crowd the benefit of his philosophy upon the situation. Rodney knew that it was hopeless to attempt to secure a private audience with him that evening, for it was already getting late. There was nothing more to do but to go home and talk it over with his mother.

What a fortune even two dollars and a half a day would be! And then if the newspaper man *should* be willing, after awhile, to give something out of his own pocket, that would be "too glorious for anything!" Then he called to mind just how much and how little he knew of the valley, and felt a tinge of fear and disappointment as he realized that although intimately familiar with the country for a few miles immediately surrounding the fort, the valley as a whole was comparatively unknown to him. He was glad that he could say that he had been to

Grenfell. It might have considerable weight with the man.

When he reached home his mother had gone to bed; but she wakened sufficiently to ask:

"Did you get any errands to do?'

"Yes, 'm," he replied, "Captain French gave me a quarter for bringing his boots from the shop."

His determination to talk over the newspaper-scouting project with his mother weakened at the sound of her hopeless voice and he resolved to confer with the shoemaker and possibly to see if he could get the place before saying anything to her about it.

He did not realize how very tired the long tramp from Grenfell and the excitement of the evening had made him until he kicked his pants off on the floor and stretched out, at full length, upon the bed.

For some time his legs ached so that he could not sleep; but his mind was so filled with the great crisis of his career that he gradually lost consciousness of his pain and finally sank to sleep in a splendid dream of really going to war.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTUNE OF WAR.

Rodney was awakened early by the drawling crow of a neigbor's rooster, for the monarch of Mrs. Merton's flock had long since been sacrificed to the family necessity along with such of his feminine followers as were not prompt in their daily contributions of eggs or engaged in rearing broods of chicks.

He bounded to the floor and was inside his pants in less time than it takes the average boy to dress for a circus, and with much the same feeling of intense and joyous excitement which such an anticipation usually inspires in the juvenile mind.

He ate his breakfast of corn-cakes in silence, and even neglected some of his chores in his haste to see the shoemaker and secure his good offices with the newspaper man.

The sight of the white canvas tents and stacks of glistening arms of the "regular" troops, about which a uniformed line of pickets were pacing to and fro upon their beats, gave Rodney a more thrilling sense of the actual presence of war than even scouts had in their more unpretentious and plebeian dress had inspired.

He leaped and ran with boyish abandon, not slackening his speed until at the very door of the shoemaker's shop.

"Why, what's the matter, son?" exclaimed "Two-

cent," as he saw the boy's agitation. "Anything the matter with your mother?"

"No—I—I—I just came to talk with you about something that I had heard down at the camps last night," stammered Rodney, panting and out of breath.

"Well, out with it!" good-naturedly commanded the cobbler, as he rolled a waxed-end upon his knee.

"There's a newspaper man down there with the scouts who has been looking for some man who lives about here and knows the valley, to carry dispatches and act as his 'private scout,' as he called it. But he hasn't found anybody yet, for he says that the men in the valley who are not with Riel want to join French's scouts and get their five dollars a day, and his paper can't pay more'n half that. But he says that he's got to have half a man if he can't find a whole one, and that if he could get some one who had hunted and trapped up an' down the river till he knew the country like a book, he'd be willing to pay something extra out of his own pocket. Do you s'pose there's any chance for me—if—you helped me, to get it? Don't you think that I might learn how to do it?" Rodney timidly inquired.

"No, you can't *learn!* If he takes you at all it'll be for what you already know an' don't have to learn. There ain't any time for learning anything except on the run. But there's one thing about it; most of the fighting that these fellows will see is going to be done right around these parts. I don't see why you wouldn't answer his purpose as well as

somebody who would set heavier on a horse, eat more an' be enough sight less gritty, honest an' willing than you."

Praise was something that Rodney Merton had known but little of; and these words from so important a personage as "Two-cent Tranquility" made the boys cheeks burn. This commendation gave him courage to ask:

"Would you be willing to go down, this morning, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, and see him about it."

"'Course, I'll go!" the cobbler almost snapped, as though the request contained an implied insult. "Didn't your father an' I summer and winter together for years when this country was new; an' didn't we always share up on anything an' everything that we had when the other was short?"

As soon as he finished tipping the waxed-end with a bristle, he hung it over a nail, took off his leather apron and said:

"Well, come on."

They walked on towards the fort in silence, Rodney being too much elated to trust himself to talk, until they approached the entrance of the palisade, when he ventured to ask:

"Will you do—do the talking, Mr. Tranquilite?"

"Yes," laughed the shoemaker. "I always do that—too much of it, I'm afraid."

"Can we see the newspaper man, who wants to engage a private scout?" boldly demanded "Two-cent" of the guard.

"That's him, leaning against the door jam," replied the guard, pointing to a slightly-built, but graceful young man, who appeared to be about thirty years of age. There was a certain fineness in the whole cast of his face, and especially in his large brown eyes, which was in rather striking contrast with the broader and less expressive faces of the scouts who came and went about him.

This expression of refinement gave the anxious, shrinking boy an added hope that his application would at least be given a kindly hearing.

"Good morning, sir," said the shoemaker, advancing toward the young correspondent, who returned the cobbler's salutation with prompt and easy courtesy, and the inquiry:

"And I may call you—ah—?"

"Tranquilite — Toussaint Tranquilite — and this young man is Rodney Merton. We heard that you wanted to engage some one who is familiar with the country about here."

"Quite right," nervously interrupted the newspaper man. "My name is Gilroy—of the *Montreal Post*. I presume it is your father who wishes to apply for the position?" he continued, glancing keenly into Rodney's face.

"No, sir. I thought that—that—perhaps—"

The shoemaker anticipated the apologetic explanation which Rodney was about to offer, and cut it short with the interruption:

"Not at all, sir! His father is dead, and he is now the head of the family, which he has mainly sup-

ported by trapping, during the winter. If you don't mind I'd like a word with you in private, an' then I'll go back to the shop an' leave you to talk it over with him."

"Certainly, Certainly," politely responded the stranger, as they turned and walked away a few rods from Rodney, who stood in nervous embarrassment, awaiting the most important decision that he had yet been called to face.

When the two men finished their private conference, in which the shoemaker praised the lad's courage, intelligence and honesty, they came back to where Rodney stood poking a gravel stone with the big toe of his bare foot.

A glance at their faces told Rodney that a probable decision had been reached, but he could hardly determine whether it was favorable or unfavorable.

"Oh, one thing more!" exclaimed Gilroy, as Rodney's sponsor was about to take his leave. "What about price? How much do you think our young friend should have? I can pay a fair price, but, of course, there's nothing fancy in it."

"No, I suppose not," reflected Tranquilite. "Under the circumstances I should say that the lad ought to be worth a good three dollars a day to you, if he does as well as a man."

"Well, perhaps," was the correspondent's equivocal answer, as he nodded good-bye to the man and turned his keen eyes upon the boy. For several moments he said nothing, but stood stroking his moustache in deliberation.

"And so you think that you want a little of the fortunes of war, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are not forgetting that you will be exposed to practically the same dangers that these government scouts are, and that they are sent into the most exposed positions doing flanking and out post duty in order to lessen the danger to the regular soldiers?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then, if you've made up your mind to go into the thickest of it, if necessary, and take everything as it comes along with the chance of never returning—I'll take you, and pay what your friend suggested."

If Rodney had yielded to its natural impulse he would have jumped into the air and "yelled." But he controlled his emotions and simply answered:

"Yes, sir. When shall I come?"

"To-morrow; for there's no telling how soon we may be ordered out of here. By the way, have you a pony?"

"No, sir."

"Nor any money to get one with?"

"No, sir," Rodney answered reluctantly as though he were a trifle ashamed to make the confession.

"Well, then, I'll have to scare up some kind of a mount for you. Suppose you come around this afternoon and see what luck I have in finding something that you can ride."

"Without waiting for a reply Gilroy turned and

entered the quarters, while Rodney bounded out of the stockade and toward the cobbler's shop to carry the news of his wonderful fortune.

The kindly old man shared in the boy's joy, while claiming the credit of having been the principal means in securing it.

"If this trouble will only last long enough, you'll be able to buy out the whole town," he laughingly remarked.

As Rodney went out of the door, wondering how his mother would receive the news which he must break to her, Tranquilite called after him:

"Son, if your mother don't take to the plan, just you tell her to come and talk with me."

This was a great relief to Rodney who began to fear that the most difficult obstacle was yet to be encountered in securing her consent to the undertaking. He felt sure, however, that, if it came to the worst, the shrewd old cobbler, with his reputation for good sense, would somehow convince his mother that it was best to let him go.

CHAPTER IV.

PROUD PREPARATIONS.

As Rodney approached their cabin and saw his mother bending over her wash tub, "doing out" some clothes for the officers, his heart gave a leap of pride and joy at the thought that very soon he would be able to relieve her from the necessity of such hard work.

"Ma—I've—I've got some news," Rodney announced, with many inward misgiving as to how she would receive it.

"Well," replied Mrs. Merton, stopping her rubbing long enough to scrape the perspiration from her forehead with her dripping forefinger. "There's no lack of news these days—goodness knows—such as it is. But if you've got some good news I'd be thankful to hear that."

Rodney had become accustomed to the hopelessness which long years of unavailing struggle and sorrow had fastened upon his mother until it had become inbred in her every tone and word. But her dejection this morning seemed greater than usual and had a touch of desperation in it which materially raised his hope that she would accept any alternative that promised relief from the grind and pressure of their poverty.

"I've had an offer of three dollars a day."

"Three dollars a day!" she repeated in astonishment, her face flushed with greater animation than he had seen it express in years. Then a quick shadow passed over it as she inquired, "'Taint to join the scouts, is it, Rodney?"

"No—not exactly. It's to carry messages an' wait on a newspaper man, who is going along with the scouts, to write up the Rebellion for the Toronto and London papers. Mr. Tranquilite got the chance for me an' I'm to get three dollars a day and all expenses—horse an' everything, as long 's the war lasts. Mr. Gilroy—the newspaper man—wants me to come back an' help him pick out a mount for me this forenoon." He felt a strong pride in using the word "mount" instead of horse; it sounded so "military."

"Well, there aint any time to lose then. It's most ten now. You better hurry."

With this she again plunged the shirt, which she had been rubbing, into the suds and dismissed the matter and him as though the occasion were as commonplace as an errand to the post for family supplies.

Rodney had expected opposition and tears on the part of his mother and this kind of a reception was so different from what he had anticipated that he was nonplussed, not to say almost disappointed. Could it be that his mother loved him less than he had thought and she could let him go to war with scarcely a moment's hesitation or regret. This latter

thought, it must be confessed, touched his pride as well as his affection. It hurt him to think that he should be *actually going to war* without even his own mother realizing the dignity and the danger of the occasion, which, it seemed to him, should impress everybody.

As he turned to go back to the fort his mother called after him:

"Rodney, now look sharp that they don't put off any vicious brute onto y'. Git a gentle one."

He found Gilroy in front of the fort looking at a collection of horses. They were not as sightly as could be wished; but Rodney realized that there might be times when this would be the least necessary qualification. The resemblance of one of them, which had a ponderous white Roman nose, tattered ears and Albino eyes, to a picture of a cow-boy's steed which he had seen in the *Youth's Companion*, at once determined his choice. The story which accompanied the illustration had described the cow-boy's bronco as a shining example of courage and endurance, and had detailed the brute's heroic conduct in an exciting Indian fight on the plains. This resemblance determined him to select the pink-eyed, Roman-nosed shaganappy if the choice was left to him.

"Well, which one takes your eye?" inquired Gilroy.

"I think the spotted one with the big nose," Rodney replied.

"The boy's head 's level," spoke up Captain

French who had quietly joined the spectators to the negotiations. "I know that horse. He used to be in the mounted police. He'll thrive where a common horse will starve. O, he's a stayer. Knows more than lots of police I've seen, and is just as handsome, too!"

This brought a hearty laugh from the scouts and made Rodney feel that he was getting on well for a beginning.

"How old is he?" inquired Gilroy of the Captain.

"Oh, he's of age, anyway. I never counted his teeth. Always rather count his ribs—so much handier, y' see."

"All right, I'll take him, if you think he's safe for the boy," said Gilroy, as he handed the halter to Rodney, whose heart swelled with conscious pride as he led his horse past a group of the village boys, who now seemed strangely young and insignificant to him.

Rodney spent the remainder of the day in grooming his pie bald treasure and in packing the meager bundle that was to constitute his outfit.

It gave him an honest, manly pride to have Leveque call him into the post and say:

"Now if there's anything you want to fit out with, or anything your ma wants while you're gone, you can have the credit for it."

Rodney would have liked to refuse this offer of credit from the man who had denied it to him and to his mother when he was out of employment, but he knew that his mother stood in immediate need

of many things and that he would be greatly ashamed to report for duty without shoes and stockings and dressed in his present "best clothes" which were little better than a faithful and variegated collection of patches. Consequently he was obliged to swallow his pride and accept the offer of credit. When clothed in a suit, stockings and boots he felt that he had left boyish things behind him and had entered upon the serious affairs of life.

He did not go to bed until late that night, and when he did it was in a different fashion than usual. Instead of kicking a pair of tattered trousers from legs, that had been bare-footed all day, he took off his boots and stockings with manly deliberation and hung his long trousers by the strap in the back with a dignity becoming one who had re-established the family credit, and who was going to war as a private newspaper scout on a salary of three dollars a day, and a horse that he might call his own.

He looked carefully about his loft and tried to realize that it was probably the last night that he would sleep in it for many months—perhaps forever.

When he went to sleep, it was in wondering whether people would not sometime visit that loft to see where General Rodney Merton, the famous scout of the North West, had slept when a boy.

His mother called him bright and early the next morning, and when he reached the stable to take care of Gilroy's horse and his own, he found that he was in advance of the earliest scout.

After Gilroy had lighted his after-breakfast pipe,

he called Rodney, and motioned him to a seat upon the grass.

"Be back in a minute," the newspaper man explained as he disapeared into the quarters.

When he again appeared, he carried a repeating rifle and a belt in which were hung a pair of new six-shooters, a knife and a field glass.

"Now lad," said Gilroy as he handed them to the astonished boy, "You want to learn how to use these trinkets, and how to take care of them. And what's more you've got to learn all the discipline that a regular scout is under—just what every command means, and how to obey it. I've arranged with Lieutenant Johns to teach you all he can until we get marching orders. Then you'll have to fall in line with the rest and make the best you can of it. Here he comes now, ready for business. Pick it up as fast as you can, for you can't tell what bit of information is going to let you out of some tight scrape when we get into the fighting. Lieutenant, this is Private Scout Rodney Merton—ready to be taught how to steal pigs and chickens and strip dead Injuns of their finery when the Captain's back is turned."

With this introduction, Gilroy went inside to write to his paper the important news that had not happened, and left Rodney to his first lesson in the art of war.

After the noon mess, Rodney and his teacher again resumed their drill.

Suddenly a clear blast of a bugle, from the encampment of the regulars broke the quiet of the

little hamlet. It sent the chilling thrills through and through Rodney, for he knew that it was the call to mount and march.

CHAPTER V.

A BRUSH WITH THE HALF BREEDS.

ALTHOUGH Gilroy had told Rodney that they might be ordered to march at any time, the sudden summons to mount was a great surprise to him, and it gave him a shock when he realized that he would have no opportunity to say good-bye to his mother; for by the time he had saddled Gilroy's horse and executed the other orders that his employer had given him, the entire company of scouts was ready to move forward.

As the scouts were to precede the regular troops, the order to march was promptly given, and they set off at an easy canter.

Rodney strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of his mother and wave her a farewell if she should chance to be observing the movement of the scouts. Just as he was passing nearly out of sight of the old home cabin, he saw her come out of the door and go to hanging out clothes, with her back turned toward him; and he could scarcely choke back the tears at the thought of leaving her without even a farewell, when perhaps he might never see her again.

However, there was too much keen excitement close about him to permit these gloomy reflections to long occupy his mind.

The sight of thirty mounted horsemen is alone sufficient to chase all other thoughts out of a healthy boy's mind; but when those horsemen are galloping out to war, and the boy mounted on his own horse with his rifle slung over his back and his revolvers in his belt, is one of their number, any feelings save swelling pride and a tremendous excitement are plainly out of the question.

Rodney was riding well at the front, between Lieutenant Johns and Gilroy, and as he turned in his saddle and glanced back over the galloping company of horses, at the regiments of "regulars," with their artillery, splendid uniforms and perfect movements, as they were just leaving the site of their recent camp, he could scarcely suppress a boyish yell of admiration.

"Oh, it's glorious!" was his mental exclamation at the stirring sight.

There was nothing to break the train of his exultant reflections until they had been several hours on the march, and th chafing of the saddle began to make itself felt on the tender surface of his legs. This irritation increased with each mile of travel, until Rodney was finally compelled to curl one leg up over the horn of his saddle, in feminine fashion, in order to secure a change of position which would temporarily relieve the blistered parts. This left the unoccupied stirrup dangling loosely.

Suddenly a loud grunt announced the presence of a pig in the stunted brush by the roadside; and before Rodney could change his position a small

razor-backed hog dashed almost in under the feet of the foremost horses. Instantly Rodney's horse wheeled, kicked, plunged and broke ranks in a way that not only promised to unseat its rider in the most unceremonious fashion, but also threatened to interrupt his soldierly career before it had fairly begun.

Finding that its violent buck-jumping failed to dislodge its rider, the pink-eyed Shaganappy resolved to try a new manœuver, and "lit out" down the road, in advance of the scouts, at a steeple-chase pace.

"Pity he ain't in the Derby—he'd take the stakes sure!" exclaimed Gilroy, as he watched Rodney's wild ride with a greater anxiety than his words indicated.

The horse and its clinging rider disappeared over the top of a wooded hill, the empty stirrups threshing the animal's sides at every plunge.

But Rodney clung to his seat with the grip of desperation. At last, as the brute's pace began to slacken from fatigue, or the conviction that it had mistaken the staying qualities of its rider, he succeeded in again getting fairly astride of the saddle.

The runaway then seemed to realize that it was ouce more under bridal control and prepared to yield the contest and settle down into obedience; but Rodney was not disposed to accept the surrender on these terms. Turning "Pink-eye," as, by common impulse, the horse had come to be named, about, Rodney regained his flapping stirrups and gave the

animal as smart a ride back to the advancing company as the runaway had made in its first dash.

He was greeted with a round of cheers as he again fell into rank.

"You won't have any more trouble with that old Shaganappy. He knows you are master now;" remarked Captain French, in a way that did Rodney as much good as the cheers of the others had done him.

By the time that the company reached Clark's Crossing Rodney had come to feel quite at home in the saddle, and the ride began to seem a trifle wearisome and monotonous. He would not admit to himself that he wanted any fighting to occur; but he cherished a secret longing that something exciting and warlike would happen.

He had his wish.

Gilroy touched his elbow and said:

"You see those horsemen along the crest of the hills, there? Well; they're Reil's scouts."

Rodney raised his glass and watched them, with the thrilling sense that it was the first sight of the enemy.

Just then the captain was heard detailing Lieutenant Johns to take a squad of twenty men and make an effort to capture the outriding Half Breed scouts.

Rodney wondered if Gilroy would order him to go with the skirmishers; but Gilroy seemed to entirely forget, in the prospect of the excitement, the presence of his private scout and dashed away with the

detachment without a word or a glance to indicate what he expected of his assistant.

Only a moment did Rodney hesitate; then he followed hard on in the tracks of his superior, in secret fear that the latter would discover his presence and send him back to the main company.

After a sharp ride of a couple of miles they halted under cover of small woods for a momentary consultation, during which Rodney was careful to keep as many horsemen and bushes between himself and Gilroy as possible.

It was decided to divide the men into two equal detachments, one of them to ride openly upon the half-breeds, the other to take a circuit and come up in form to surround them when retreating or under fire.

Gilroy waited with the party which was to lead the attack.

When a sufficient time had been allowed for the others to make their longer circuitous advance, the remaining squad pressed on to the edge of the woods, from which the Half Breeds could be seen only a few hundred rods distant, sitting quietly on their ponies and calmly watching the other body of the government scouts further down in the valley.

They had not detected the approach of Lieutenant Johns' detachment.

"Now for a sharp dash at them. If they halt to fire, do the same, and give it to them until the other boys come up behind and cut off their retreat," was the command.

Then the signal to charge was given and the twelve government scouts, including the newspaper force, leaped their horses out of the concealment into full sight of the astonished squad of Rebels, which Rodney hurriedly estimated to be about eight in number. The latter did not even pause to fire an opening salute, but wheeled and galloped toward the cover of the next stretch of woods as fast as their ponies could carry them.

"Put 'em through!" shouted the lieutenant, and the scouts urged on their horses until they rode breast to breast, with only Rodney, who contrived to keep close behind Gilroy, in the rear.

The race was more spirited and exciting than even Rodney's dreams of a charge had pictured. He had never ridden so fast in his life before, and it seemed to him that they must be going almost as fast as a railway train.

As he had never been aboard one of the latter while it was in motion, and had formed his estimate of their speed mainly in watching them across the prairie at a considerable distance, it was not wholly strange that the long, sharp, straining leaps of the animal under him should seem almost as fleet as the trains.

As the horses' speed increased, he began to wonder what would happen if they were obliged to stop short. Before he could reach any conclusion upon this problem, the scouts began to slacken their speed and fire.

"Crack!—crack!—crack!" went one repeater after another.

Rodney watched the fleeing Half Breeds, expecting to see several of them reel from their saddles; but they did not.

After some fifty rods of even more desperate riding, the scouts evidently considered themselves within rifle range, for they drew their horses to a standstill, and began firing, almost together, with a deliberate aim that sent a couple of the Half Breeds' ponies stumbling upon their knees. But they regained their feet and plunged on more furiously than before.

Rodney became so absorbed for the moment in watching the effect of the shooting that he lost thought of everything beside. When he returned to consciousness of his surroundings, he saw Gilroy's horse breaking toward the enemy at terrific speed, leaving the scouts rapidly behind.

A moment's observation convinced him that Gilroy's horse, which he knew had never been under fire before, had become unmanageable.

Would it carry the helpless correspondent so close to the half-breeds that they would pause long enough to shoot him down at short range? Then the thought flashed through Rodney's mind that they would be less likely to attempt such a move if Gilroy were not alone, and that he must catch up with his employer and lessen the danger by sharing it with him. Then there might also be a chance that, by riding close alongside Gilroy and seizing

the bit of the latter's horse, he could bring the terrified animal to a halt in time to save its rider.

The great question now in the boy's mind was not how he should stop his own horse, but whether he could overtake Gilroy before they were fairly upon the heels of the Half Breeds. He jabbed his spurs fiercely into the sides of Pink-eye and the latter responded with a sudden expenditure of reserve speed which well nigh took Rodney's breath.

In less time than he had dared to hope the Roman nose of Pink-eye was alongside the flank of Gilvoy's horse and in a second more they were neck and neck.

Rodney was about to attempt his desperate plan of seizing Gilroy's bridle, when one of the Half Breeds wheeled his pony about, raised his Winchester and sent back a bullet which dropped Gilroy's horse upon its knees.

Without a word from him Rodney's horse came to a stand still within a few rods from where Gilroy had been thrown. How the horse accomplished this feat without shooting him from the saddle was more than Rodney could understand. Only a horse with a long training in actual cavalry service could have done it, he was sure.

But there was no time for him to speculate upon it then; there was too much pressing business close at hand.

The same scout who had dropped Gilroy's horse was "pumping" the empty cartridge-shell out of his Winchester, ready for a second shot.

Scarcely knowing how he did it, Rodney leaped from his horse leveled his rifle across his saddle and fired. The rifle which had a careful bead upon Gilroy dropped from the Half Breed's hands and discharged harmlessly as it fell.

The wounded man shouted to his comrade, who were some distance in advance of him and they faced about and opened up a lively fire upon Gilroy and Rodney. The former had succeeded in getting back to his horse without being struck by any of the ballswhich whistled about him in a rapid succession as the Half Breeds could pump their Winchesters. Finding that his horse was severely wounded, Gilroy quickly drew his revolver and put the animal out of its suffering by sending a bullet through its head. He then threw himself at full length on the ground and using the dead body of the horse as a barricade and "rest" for his rifle, proceeded to return the fire of Rebels with an accuracy which was impossible to them, mounted upon their panting and exhausted ponies. Rodney was also intrenched behind his Shaganappy, which stood as motionless as though being carried or caressed.

If the range between the dueling parties had not been so great probably both would have suffered severely, but the singing of the balls close about them, and the loss of Gilroy's horse were the nearest approaches to fatalities which the newspaper scouts sustained. Nor could they see that their shots, aside from the fortunate hit made by Rodney's first ball, had any effect upon the Half Breeds. However,

the wound that Rodney then inflicted upon the daring spy no doubt saved Gilroy's life, for the two were in close quarters and Gilroy presented a fair and unprotected target for the Half Breeds aim.

Meantime Lieutenant Johns and his men galloped rapidly forward to Gilroy's relief, and when in line with him, halted and joined in the interesting fire with which he was plying the Rebels.

Had the lieutenant's object been to drop as many of the enemy as possible he would have charged the Half Breeds; but as he only wished to check their retreat until the other detachment of scouts should appear, the distance answered his purpose as effectively as nearer range.

Suddenly from out the woods a couple of hundred rods in the rear of the defensive party, came in view the other ten government scouts. A quick charge down the hill brought them in range of the Half Breeds, who were thrown into confusion by this unexpected rear attack. Without waiting for the second party to come within close range, they lost no time in giving the word of surrender and brought to a speedy close Rodney's first experience under fire.

After the prisoners had been disarmed, and all save the one whom Rodney had wounded securely bound, Gilroy grasped Rodney's hand, exclaimed:

"My lad, that first shot of yours was a lucky one for me—and a plucky one, too! It saved my bacon sure as you're alive. I supposed you were back there with the others, where, by good rights, you

ought to have been. But I'm mighty glad, as things turned out, that you were on hand; and I shall not forget this turn, either."

Just then Lieutenant Johns laid a hearty hand on Rodney's shoulder and exclaimed:

"Boy, you're a brick! Never saw a grittier piece of business in my life! That's what I call good fighting. You couldn't have done better if you'd been an old hand at it. You did the right thing at the right time. If all of my men do as well I'll be mighty thankful—that's all I can say. You plunked that squaw-man just in the niche of time."

Rodney blushed under this praise, and when he could speak replied:

"It was all so quick that I don't hardly know how I happened to do it."

"Of course! That's the way it always is in this kind of fighting. No time for fine figuring. And the men who can grasp the situation and do their work before they know how it's done are men we're looking for. No, sir; there wasn't any fool fighting in that little brush!"

"Was the man badly hurt?" asked Rodney in a tone which betrayed the hope that he had not inflicted a serious injury and the fear that his shot might have been fatal.

"Hit him square in the right shoulder. You punished him well for his recklessness; but I guess he'll pull through all right. He's back there gritting his teeth pretty hard," replied the Lieutenant Johns, with a levity that made Rodney shudder.

"If you please, I'd like to let him have my horse to ride back on," said the boy.

"Well, that's what I'd call—" But the lieutenant did not finish the sentence.

However, Rodney had the satisfaction of seeing the man whom he had wounded, ride back on old Pink-eye; and after they reached camp the tender-hearted boy not only devoted every possible moment to making the man as comfortable as his injuries would permit, but also suffered, in keen sympathy, the pains which, through the inevitable fortunes of war, he had inflicted.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIERCE BATTLE AT FISH CREEK.

THE scouts were joined at Clark's Crossing by the regulars, and the camp presented a very imposing and warlike appearance, at least to Rodney's eyes. The story of his courageous conduct in the capture of the prisoners evidently went the rounds among the regulars, many of whom had a cheerful greeting for him, treating him as nearly like a companion and an equal as men can treat boys.

But the intimate companionship which sprang up between the newspaper correspondent and Rodney was the greatest satisfaction that had yet entered into the life of the shy, quiet boy.

In a few confidential chats by their own campfire, Gilroy drew the boy out and discovered that his intelligence was equal to his courage and faithfulness and that his knowledge of good books and the things best worth knowing was far in advance, both in range and thoroughness, of that acquired by the average boy under the best educational environments.

"I'll tell you what's the matter, Captain," said the correspondent to Captain French; "that lad's got sound parts. He's lived in that little frontier town and picked from a priest and his library more real culture than I had, at his age, after attending

one of the best private schools in England. All he needs now to make him a broad man is the worldly wisdom that he'll get in knocking about the world—and I guess he'll pick that up fast enough. Anyway I mean to do the square thing by him. I believe he's got the making of a good newspaper man in him."

It was enough for Rodney to know that Gilroy seemed to like him and gave him the hearty good fellowship that only an adult companion could have expected. It was something to which Rodney had never dared aspire.

It seemed to Rodney that he had never listened to anything quite so interesting as Gilroy's account of the great newspaper offices that he had visited and their wonderful printing-presses.

Rodney purposed to ask more about these, but the exciting events which followed the division of the troops, on the third day at Clark's Crossing, put all but present events out of mind for the time being.

As it was impossible to tell upon which side of the river the Riel forces would be encountered, the troops were divided equally between Lord Melgund and Gen. Middleton, the former proceeding on the north side of the river, while the latter scoured the south shore, the scouts coming under the command of Lord Melgund.

The additional number of troops in the marching columns, the presence of the uniformed regulars and the hourly expectation of coming upon the

enemy, made the march full of excitement to Rodney.

It was not until the third day out of Clark's Crossing that the sharp, crackling reports of musketry, on the opposite bank, told that the enemy had been engaged by Gen. Middleton's division.

Then anticipations leaped to fever-heat on every hand. Rodney had often speculated upon the feelings of a soldier about to enter an engagement, and had come to the secret conclusion that, while a worthy soldier would not shrink from the deliberate hazard of his life, he would "look death in the face" and mentally prepare himself for the worst that might happen. It was almost impossible for him to realize that the men about him were expecting to be in the thick of battle within the next hour. The Half Breed boys at the fort had never been in more jovial spirits in anticipation ot a game of ball or a wrestling match than were these ligh-hearted soldiers. It was only by an analysis of his own feelings that Rodney could judge the emotions of the others. It seemed to him that probably many of the men would be shot, but not himself. He accounted, however, for his own comfortable personal view of the matter by the fact that he would probably be in a safe place, and not exposed to the dangers like the others.

The appearance of a couple of aides, riding at greatest speed over the crest of the hills, on the opposite side, was the signal for a burst of cheers.

Before their arrival, Rodney watched the

gunners train their cannon from the brow of the bluff upon the spot where the Half Breeds were supposed to be ambushed. It made the boy cringe to watch the effect of the balls from the big gun, as they crashed through the trees that opposed their passage.

Before many discharges from the battery, the aides dashed up to Lord Melgund, bringing dispatches from Gen. Middleton, directing the latter to be sent across the river, to his assistance, under guard of the scouts.

An old scow had been floated down the river and anchored for transport purposes, and upon this the cannon, after infinite pains, was loaded.

The tug-of-war, however, came in landing the gun and getting it up the steep bank on the opposite side.

To do manual labor while exposed to the fire of the enemy was a sort of bravery which Rodney appreciated for the first time, as he saw the men laboring to hoist the heavy gun up the declivity, while the balls from the rifles of the Rebel sharp shooters whistled close about them.

The latter were entrenched in a V-shaped ravine, protected by timber and carefully-constructed rifle pits, from which they poured, with comparative safety, a telling fire upon the government forces, which occupied the high, exposed position upon the bank of the ravine.

"Now, young man," said Gilroy, rather sternly, as soon as they reached the elevation from which

the cannon was ranged upon the occupants of the ravine, "I want you to take care of yourself and keep out of danger. There will be no reason for you to expose yourself at all during the fight. Just see all you can of it within the bounds of safety, and try to remember every incident and detail, so that you can tell me all about it afterwards. When the fight is over I shall have to send you back to the station with a dispatch; so you'd better catch as much sleep as you can, for you'll need it."

At first Rodney kept carefully in the back ground, but as the excitement intensified, his recollection of Gilroy's kindly instructions became gradually less vivid, and when he finally saw a large log laying close along the edge of the bank he lost no time creeping to it. It was an ideal position from which to observe the fight, and Rodney wondered that some of the scouts had not found it before him.

A small opening underneath the log formed an excellent peep-hole, through which he could see distinctly, without the possibility of being sighted by the Rebels.

"I'll tell Mr. Gilroy of this; for I'll warrant he hasn't found as good an outlook," exclaimed Rodney, as he turned about and crawled back out of range, where he expected to find the correspondent.

The first men whom Rodney encountered were four of the scouts, who were bringing back a companion on an improvised stretcher.

The man had been struck in the lower jaw by a sharp-shooter's ball and presented a ghastly sight,

from which the boy turned away with a faint and sickening sensation.

"Looking for Gilroy?" asked one of the men, who knew the young newspaper scout.

"Yes, sir! Can you tell me where he is?"

"Right over there in that clump of trees, along with the general. It's infernal warm over there just now and you'd b.tter pick your way and keep behind the trees. No sense in being fool-hardy, you know."

Rodney could see the erect form of General Middleton, mounted on his handsome horse, and standing beside him was Gilroy.

Taking as protected a course as possible Rodney soon found himself safely beside Gilroy, who turned upon him with a disapproving frown and the exclamation:

"What! You here? This is no place for anyone who doesn't have to fight."

He might have said more, but that instant the shrill scream of a ball made them cringe and dodge.

"That's a close call for some of us!" said Gilroy, changing the subject.

"Rather, yes!" said the general, as he quickly changed his position, took his fur hat from his head and held it out toward Gilroy, "I reckon that shot was meant for me!"

The bullet had ripped through the top of the hat and could not have passed more than an inch from his head.

"Those fellows are about as near dead shots as

they make them—and Gabriel Dumont is the champion of the whole outfit." added the general, and then gave the order for the rifles to keep a sharp lookout for the head of Riel's chief of staff, who was known by his peculiar hat, and to make him a special target.

"That's business!" remarked Captain Wise of the staff, in an undertone to Gilroy. "Every time Dumont shows his head above their rifle pit it means Gabriel's trump for some fellow on our side. And he is just smart enough to change his position after every shot. No telling where he will bob up."

The wonderful coolness of General Middleton, and of all the men about him, under such terrible danger, impressed Rodney with a feeling of awe and admiration, which made a big lump rise in his throat. It seemed to him that his own conduct in the skirmish with the Half Breed scouts was nothing compared with such deliberate bravery as these men displayed; and he felt a keen sense of shame at the impulse which at that moment made him wish that he were in safer quarters.

"There's a perfectly safe place over there behind a big log, right on the brow of the bluff, where we can see the whole thing through a crack under the log. I thought mebby you'd like to know of it," explained Rodney, in an undertone.

"All right, we'll——"

A fierce cry of pain, different from any that Rodney had yet heard, cut short the remainder of Gilroy's remark.

At the same instant Rodney saw the splendid animal, one of the best in camp, upon which the Hon. Feinnes, of the general's staff, was mounted, rear and plunge. It had been shot through and its peculiar scream seemed even more terrible to the boy than the moans of pain that had escaped the wounded man whom he had met a few moments before.

He expected to see the horse drop at once, as the blood was spurting a stream from its side.

Feinnes, who was seeking to obtain a better knowledge of the enemy's position and a more telling arrangement of his own forces, plunged his spurs into his mortally wounded horse and rode sheer up to the brink of the ravine, where his figure must have been clearly silhouetted against the sky.

The close and clear view of the Rebels which this point of vantage afforded the reckless young officer was too great a temptation to him, and he drew his revolvers and deliberately emptied them at Half Breeds, while a volley of balls whistled around him.

"The fool!" exclaimed Gilroy, as he grasped Lieutenant Johns' arm and watched the man under the spell of the same awful fascination which held Rodney's attention, expecting that the next instant would see both man and horse fall— perhaps over the brink of the ravine.

When Feinnes had emptied the chambers of both his revolvers he wheeled his horse about and rode back towards his men.

"Well, if those Half Breeds don't give him credit

for being charmed, then I'm mistaken," exclaimed Lieutenant Johns. "That was the nerviest piece of fool fighting I ever saw. He must be bullet-proof, for nothing short of a miracle could have saved him."

"Come, lad, let's get out of this. It's altogether too lively for me here," said Gilroy, who made no secret of the fear which Rodney had been ashamed to admit even to himself.

Rodney led the way to his log.

"Just see the horses down there along the creek!" exclaimed Gilroy, pointing to the ponies of the Half Breeds which had been hitched to the timber in the bottom of the ravine. Many of them were dead, while the wounded ones were plunging furiously in efforts to break their Shagnappy lariats.

"If you can get the drop on any of 'em that haven't been killed or disabled, you might get a little good rifle practice," suggested Gilroy.

"I'd rather put some of the wounded and suffering ones out of their misery," replied Rodney, whose humane instincts and natural love of all animals, and especially of horses, revolted against the thought of deliberately shooting down the innocent creatures. It seemed to him that it would be more nearly right to shoot the men who had left them thus exposed.

He therefore selected one after another of the wounded ones and made them his target.

"I'm going to see if I can hit that spotted one in the head," said Rodney, as he took aim at a pony

that had been wounded and was laying back upon its tether until its haunches almost touched the ground.

"Good! try another!" exclaimed Gilroy, as the Shaganappy dropped limply to the ground after the report of Rodney's rifle.

As Rodney opened the guard of his repeater to eject the exploded shell and throw a fresh cartridge into place he exclaimed:

"Look! There's Dumont!"

The next moment, as Gilroy leveled his rifle at the famous Half Breed lieutenant, Rodney would have given almost anything in his power to have recalled his words.

"Click!" went the hammer of the gun. The cartridge had failed and Gilroy jerked back the shell ejector with a stronger exclamation of anger and disgust than Rodney had ever heard h[illegible] use before.

Rodney, however, could scarcely surpress the exclamation of relief and thankfulness that rose to his lips at the result. It seemed like murder to him to lay concealed in ambush, select a particular victim and shoot him down with cool, calculating deliberation.

"That fellow's like Feinnes, he's bullet-proof—and a regular dare-devil, too. I'll bet he's killed more of our men than any man in Riel's army. And the bad whisky that he used to sell in his groggery has done up perhaps as many honest men as his rifle has."

Rodney could not help thinking that the dashing

young Half Breed certainly commanded greater respect in his present role of chief lieutenant of the oppressed settlers' forces than, in his former calling, of selling slow poison to his friends.

As the dusk settled down the firing gradually ceased, picket lines were thrown out and the newspaper scouts moved about headquarters picking up the details of the day's fighting.

It was learned that the goverment forces had lost about forty-nine men.

"Now turn in and sleep until I wake you. I shall get my specials written up by early morning and then I'll rout you and you can take the back track for the telegraph station. I don't think you'll have any trouble in getting through all right, but you'll have to keep a sharp out-look for Rebel scouts. And if you should run against any of them, don't have any false pride about showing them your horse's heels and leaving them behind as fast as possible. Well, good-night."

With these instructions in his mind, Rodney rolled himself in his blanket, feeling that sleep would be out of the question after the intense excitement of the day.

He was but fairly launched in his speculations upon what the morrow would bring forth, when he dropped into heavy slumber.

It seemed to him, when in the morning Gilroy's vigorous shakes aroused him, that he had but just retired.

"Put these dispatches in your boots, get your-

self some breakfast and then put out at as good a pace as you think your horse will hold. If you make the trip in extra time, quick you may get back here before we break camp, for the general has decided to wait for reinforcements before moving on to Batosch."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST CHILD.

THERE had always been a peculiar charm to Rodney in the gray dimness of an early spring morning; and as he saddled Pink-eye, after eating his breakfast and providing himself with a little lunch for his journey, this peculiar influence was especially strong upon him. It stirred all the tender instincts of the boy, and his thoughts went back to his mother. He wondered whether or not she had found it very lonely since his departure, and from that fell to thinking how glad she would be to see him when he should return.

Although he had been as obedient and thoughtful of his parents' comfort as any happy, healthy boy could reasonably be expected to be, it was not difficult, when in this reflective mood, to recall many ways in which he might have contributed to his mother's happiness and comfort, which he had failed to improve; and as the weary, hopeless drudgery of her life came clearly before his mind its pathetic desolateness touched him more strongly than ever before.

"If I get through this thing all right, I know what I'll do!" he mused, slapping his leg in a burst of enthusiasm. "Mother shall have a trip back to Illinois to see her folks. It would do her a world

of good. And maybe I could go with her and get a place on some newspaper."

The barking of a dog, that had been waiting in ambush by the side of the road, aroused him from his reverie to the consciousness that he was making very poor haste.

The snapping of the cur about the heels of Pink-eye set the Shaganappy off at a round canter, to which he steadily held.

When passing through the open country Rodney felt comparatively little anxiety about his safety from prowling scouts; but as he approached a long stretch of woods, which came close to the road on either side, his watchfulness instinctively quickened and his faculties were keyed to catch the slightest sign of danger.

He was well along into the center of the woods, when he pulled Pink-eye to a sharp halt and paused to listen.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it! He surely heard a human voice back from the road, in the interior of the woods. Again he listened. This time the sound came with startling clearness. It was a woman's voice, hoarse and strained, calling loudly.

"Jean! Oh Jean! Jean!" it repeated, in a voice that told him plainly that the woman must be hunting for a lost child.

"It wont take long, just to stop and see what the trouble is," he argued with himself; "and I'll push Pink-eye through a little harder to make up for the delay."

As the voice sounded nearer with each repetition of the pitiful call, he concluded that he would see the woman as soon by waiting quietly in the road where he was, as he would by attempting to get through the timber toward her. He also did not wish to run the risk of leaving his horse for even a few moments in the road. It seemed impossible for him to pass by without any heed to the woman's distress, and he did not think best to call out to her.

Although obliged to wait but a few moments, it seemed a long time to Rodney, under stress of his sympathy and anxiety, before the woman appeared in the road, several rods in advance of him.

He called quietly to her and was soon at her side, listening to her story.

Her husband, she said, was in Riel's forces at Batosch, and she had been left at home with their four children. Their cabin was so close to the bank of the ravine, at Fish Creek, that she had been obliged to flee from it with her children. They had started for the cabin of a friend, five miles in the direction in which Rodney was going.

When they had reached the edge of the woods it came to her that she had forgotten, in the panic of their fright, the little money she had hid in the cabin, and now that the children were out of danger, she determined to go back for it. Leaving the three younger children in care of the eldest girl, seven years old, she hurried back to their deserted home and secured the stocking in which their little hoard of money was concealed.

In an hour she was back to her children, but the oldest girl was missing. The baby had called for water and she had gone to look for a spring. From that time she had been searching the woods, without finding any trace of the lost girl. The other children had been left with the wife of a settler, whose cabin was near at hand.

Rodney assured her that he would not only keep a constant lookout for the child, in the remainder of his journey, but would also stop at the cabin to which they had originally set out, and tell their friends of her distress.

It was a severe hardship for the boy to continue his journey, but there seemed to be no escape from the necessity of this. He consoled himself, however, with the thought that perhaps he might be as likely to come accidentally upon the lost child as he would be to find it upon a definite search.

When at last he reached the telegraph station and tied old Pink-eye to the ring in the platform, he could not forbear putting a few caressing pats upon the pony's scrawny, U-shaped neck, which was wet with foam and sweat.

"Well, you *are* a stayer, so you are! I'll see if I can't scare you up a good feed of oats," he said to the pony, which seemed to understand his words.

After attending to the dispatches and writing a short letter to his mother, Rodney secured from the station agent a feed of oats and gave them to the faithful animal, which he carefully groomed with a bit of an old blanket, also obtained from the agent.

Then he ate his lunch and wrote a short letter to his mother.

But his mind was filled with thoughts of the half-breed mother, searching the woods for her lost child. If only he might find the little girl! He determined to risk a slight delay in getting back to camp in order to make a short search for the child, for he was sure that Gilroy would not object, under the circumstances.

With this determination, he quickly saddled Pink-eye and began to retrace his course at even greater speed than he had come.

So completely did the thought of rescuing the child absorb him, that Gilroy's caution about keeping a sharp lookout for prowling half-breed scouts was completely forgotten.

He paused and listened to every unusual sound, and frequently went out of the roadway to investigate objects which had the faintest suggestion of resemblance to a child or to a bit of clothing. But each of these sounds and objects, which at first excited his hopes, proved upon investigation to be natural and common-place, that he wondered how he could have been misled by them; and as he had neared the place where he had met the woman, he almost despaired of success.

Nevertheless, he paused a moment to debate with himself the advisability of carrying out his determination. In view of the fact that the mother had herself patroled the woods, calling the child's name at almost every step, it seemed useless for him

to spend the hour or two that he would dare to delay, in searching over the same ground.

"It's no use ! I might just as well go on," he said to himself, and accordingly put spurs to his horse and hastened on.

As he came within sight of the "open" between the timber and the camp, overlooking Fish Creek, he noticed what seemed like a light trail leading into the woods. Closer scrutiny confirmed this suspicion, for there were the prints of a horse's hoof, which had been recently shod.

"I'll follow this up for a little way and see where it leads to," he said to himself.

Although a moment's reflection would have furnished Rodney with several reasonable explanations for the presence of this trail, it aroused in him a boyish excitement, at the thought of having discovered a secret trail which he could follow alone. Who could tell to what strange developments it might lead?

It was with difficulty that he managed to follow the trail for about a hundred rods through the woods into the mouth of a rocky and watered ravine, the existence of which he had not, from the general "lay" of the country, before mistrusted. This was an interesting development, and he could not resist the temptation to continue his explorations a little distance further up the gulch, although he was no longer able to see the prints of the sharply "corked" horseshoes.

As he proceeded he found the banks on either

side of the stream more high and rocky. Occasionally flat shelves of rock jutted out at considerable elevations, and as frequently he caught sight of large holes in the banks, which looked delightfully suggestive to his boyish imagination, of dark and secret caverns.

He was about to halt and investigate one of these openings, when he heard far up the ravine the violent bellowing of a bull. At first his impulse was to dismiss this fact without further thought, but in his alert and imaginative mood, the most ordinary facts became significant, and he relinquished his purpose to peer in the hole as quickly as he had formed it.

Putting spurs to his horse, he cantered briskly up the flat, shaly bottom of the gulch, until it turned a sharp angle. As he dashed around this curve, his heart seemed for the moment to cease beating.

Within twenty rods of him, hooking and pawing the earth of the bank in rage, and bellowing furiously, was as scurvy and uninviting a specimen of semi-wild bull as Rodney had ever seen, while from one of the protruding shelves of stone waved in the wind the object which had inflamed the creature's fury to a state of madness.

It was the red flannel dress of a child. Each time that a breeze would shake the garment, the bull's rage would mount to a terrific pitch, and the brute would rush up the steep bank until he would find himself standing impotently underneath the shelf of rock upon which the child was resting.

Before Rodney could pull Pink-eye to a halt, the bull caught sight of him, paused a moment, with his sharp, grimy horns lifted smartly aloof, and then, with a wild, resonant bellow, charged upon the new invader of his retreat.

All of the cow-boy stories which Rodney had read represented that, when in the saddle, a man was safe from the attacks of cattle, save in the case of a stampede.

Rodney thought of this, as the bull came bounding toward him, and would not have been surprised to see the animal stop at any moment.

But the bull did not stop. It's leaps became quicker and longer. Rodney reached for his revolver, unbuttoned the flap of his holster, and drew it out, just as the bull plunged into the shallow water of the stream.

The boy had no notion of running from a "scrub" bull, whether there were any spectators present to observe his conduct or not.

"Whoa—stand still, Pink-eye!" he commanded the shaganappy, which obeyed with military promptness and fidelity.

Then he fired three shots, in rapid succession, at the breast of the oncoming brute, and jabbed his spurs into the pony's flanks, as he imagined a Spanish bull-fighter might do.

It was a happy precaution, for an instant after the bull made a plunge which would have pinned both horns into the horse's side.

Quickly wheeling Pink-eye about, Rodney again

emptied a chamber of his revolver at the broadside of the bull, as the latter went sprawling upon his knees on the stones.

This ball, which entered the animal's side just back of it's shoulder, was more effective than the others, although it did not produce instant death, as Rodney expected when he saw, by the spurting blood, where it had entered. The wounded bull still continued to propel itself by its hind legs, while its breast plowed up the loose shale stones in the bed of the ravine.

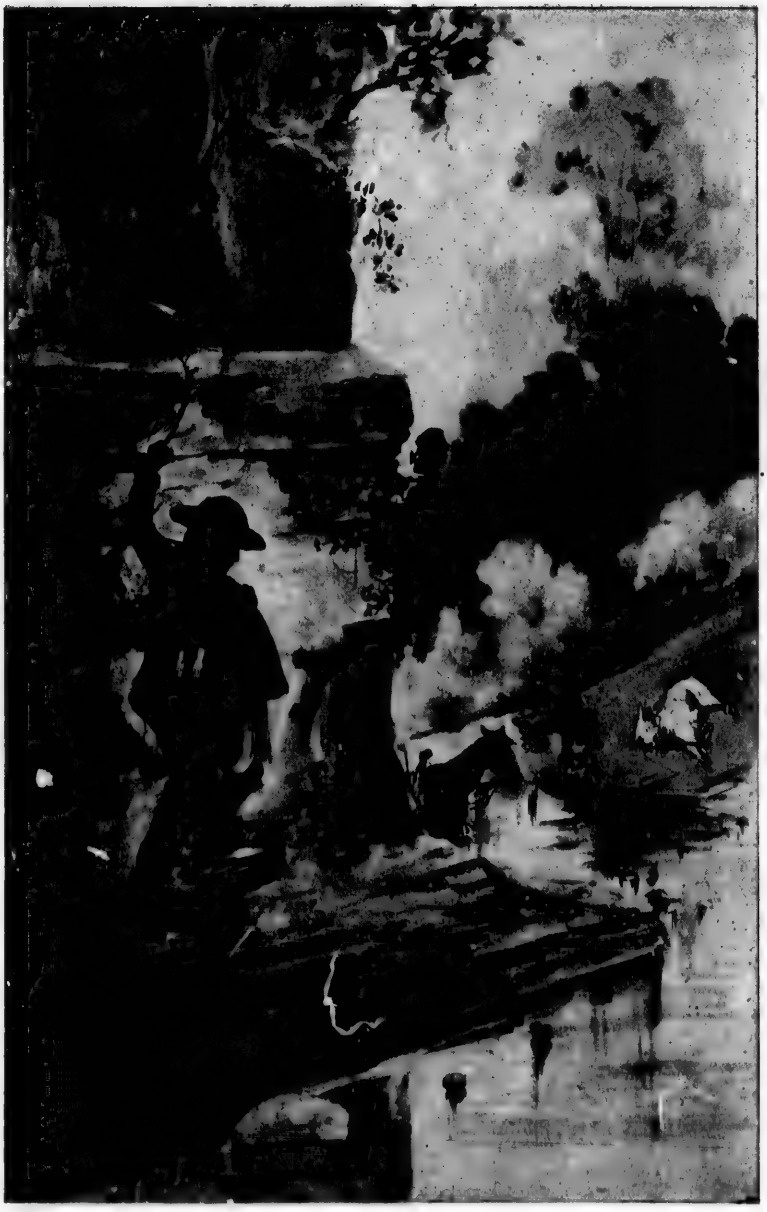
Believing that the creature was mortally wounded, Rodney took more deliberate aim, and sent the two remaining charges into its vital parts with fatal effect. In the intense excitement of his own peril Rodney, for the instant, forgot the presence of the child; but as soon as he saw that the bull was dead, the recollection of the little figure stretched upon the shelf of rock came back to him with fresh force and emphasis.

"Is she alive?" was the awful question that spurred him to put his horse through the slippery bed of the stream at a reckless gallop.

Reaching a spot below the rock, he leaped from his saddle and clambered up the steep bank.

"Dead!" he muttered, as he caught the first glimpse of the child's face.

Instantly gathering the limp, little body in his arms, the lad rushed down the bank to the edge of the creek, from which he dipped handfuls of water and dashed them into her face.



RESCUE OF THE LOST CHILD.

He saw her eyelids twich and quiver. At last they opened and she gave a little cry—he could not tell whether of joy or fear—and then sank into stupor again. Having once seen a boy, who had, when skating, fallen through the ice of the river, brought back from unconsciousness by vigorous rubbing, Rodney determined to try that remedy on the child, and promptly began to chafe her face, hands and bare feet and ankles.

It proved almost instantly effective, for the child soon revived and sat upright on the stones.

Where is the bull—and ma—and the children?" she asked in confusion.

"The bull is dead—over there on the other side; see?" he answered, pointing to the animal. "Your mother and the children are safe and I am going to take you to them. I'm a newspaper scout, and that's my horse up by the bank behind us," he added proudly; but was almost ashamed of the words as soon as he had spoken them, for he realized that they were a little foolish and boastful.

"Oh I'm awful hungry!" exclaimed the child, in a pitiful wailing tone, and then began to sob.

"Drink some water and I'll go to my saddle and get some crackers that I had left from my lunch."

He scooped up more water in the palm of his hand and held it to her lips again and again. It seemed to Rodney that she could not have drank more eagerly if she had been rescued from days of wondering without water upon the plains or the Sahara.

"There! You hadn't better drink any more just now." He ran to his saddle and took from behind it the little bundle in which he had stowed the remnants of his lunch.

After soaking a couple of the crackers in the water he gave them to her, and she devoured them with an almost savage greed.

"You'll have to let me carry you in front of me on the saddle. Do you think you can stand it to ride that way? We'll be where your mother is in just a few minutes if you can." And without waiting for a reply he carried her to the side of Pink-eye and lifted her tenderly into the saddle.

She clung to its horn while he mounted and then he started to retrace his course back to the road.

Before they had gone a dozen rods he gave the bridle-rein a sharp pull, which brought Pink-eye to an abrupt halt. After a moment of intent listening he wheeled the faithful shaganappy quickly about, and said in an undertone:

"Now Jean, don't be frightened, or cry. We must ride fast, for you know your mother is waiting to see you."

Then he plunged the spurs into the pony's sides with a vigor that gave the knowing brute to understand that serious business was on hand.

As it leaped along the hard level bottom of the ravine Rodney could hear the clatter of other hoofs beyond the turn in the ravine, coming toward him at terrific speed. He was sure that they were rebel

scouts who had been attracted by the sound of his shots at the bull.

It required only a few minutes to confirm this opinion, for as half a dozen horsemen came in sight around the turn of the gully, as many bullets whistled after him.

They were fired at too great a distance and from too unsteady seats to do him any injury.

For a hundred rods he held his distance straight ahead, holding in front of him the child, who seemed too terrified to even scream. Then he could see that the scouts were gradually gaining upon his awkwardly burdened horse.

When it seemed as though a few moments more must surely bring his pursuers within rifle range of him, he saw some thirty rods ahead of him a tributary creek joining the main stream by the side of which he was riding.

The thought flashed into his mind that this branch ravine would doubtless lead him up to the general level of the surrounding country sooner than the principal one that he was now following. Although he could not have given a reason for this intuition he instinctively accepted it and took new courage.

All that spurs and words of urging could do to incite Pink-eye to a fresh burst of speed was done, and the animal seemed to grasp a full understanding of the fearful necessities of the moment. His hoofs struck sparks from the stony trail at every leap.

Not until close up to the point where they must turn into the tributary ravine did Rodney cease to

urge the animal on. Then he even slackened Pinkeye's speed in order to round the abrupt turn in safety.

As he did this, another volley of shots told him that the scouts were still in desperate pursuit and determined to contest every possible chance to escape; but again their balls fell wide of the mark.

Once safely around the difficult turn, he again bent every effort to regain his former speed.

Before the scouts came once more in view, a glad shout broke from the lad, for at the end of the ravine, not a hundred rods beyond, he caught sight of the camp of the rifles and the government scouts.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FORAGING EXPEDITION.

THE significance of Rodney's yell seemed to be instantly understood by both his pursuers and the friends in front of him, for scarcely had the echoes died away when he saw that a detachment of horsemen break from the ranks of government scouts and come to his relief with all possible speed; but the shots and the clatter of hoofs behind him suddenly stopped and he rightly guessed that the rebel scouts had not only abandoned all hope of capturing him but were making good their own escape.

He therefore slackened his speed and made the remaining distance to camp in greater leisure, for old Pink-eye was well-spent and winded by the long and rapid journey of the day and the exciting race with which it had ended.

As the posse of scouts in pursuit of the rebels who had given Rodney so close a chase urged their horses past him, they gave him rousing cheers at the sight of the child.

The reception which was given him in camp, as he handed his burden into Gilroy's arms and dismounted, was enough to have made a full-grown man proud, to say nothing of a boy.

As he suspected from their behavior, the troops had heard the story of the lost child—and there was

not a man of them who would not have risked his own life to save the little girl.

Not only did the scouts gather about Rodney to hear an account of his adventure, but they were joined by the captains and even Lord Melgund and Gen. Middleton.

Meantime the child had been given into the care of the physician, for fear that the intense strain through which it had just passed, following instantly upon partaking of the first food after so terrible a fast, might result seriously.

"Someone ought to go at once and tell the mother that the child is found," suggested Gilroy. Especially as it is decided best to keep her under the doctor's charge until she is out of all danger from the fast and excitement."

"Let the boy go himself. He's earned it," added Captain French.

This suggestion was accepted as a happy one by all, and Rodney, mounted on a fresh horse and accompanied by Gilroy set out to find the mother.

After visiting several of the cabins in the vicinity of the woods where Rodney had found the distressed mother, they at last approached one which well was concealed in the timber.

"Hark!" exclaimed Rodney, stopping his horse, "I can hear somebody crying!"

"Sounds like it; don't it? I guess we're on the right track this time," responded Gilroy.

A nearer approach to the little cabin confirmed their hopes, for a low, pitiful wailing that sounded

strangely wierd and uncanny in the deepening shadows of the dusk, became clearer.

A dog bounded from his lair and under the cabin and came forward, growling and showing his teeth with a savage dignity that indicated to Gilroy and Rodney that his bite promised to be more dangerous than his bark.

"Helloo!" called Gilroy loudly at the house, and then added, in an undertone, to Rodney:

"I don't believe that I'd like to trouble the hen-roosts around this place until reasonably certain that this bloody cur is out of the way."

Rodney noticed that the wailing had ceased with the first growl of the dog.

In a moment the door opened wide enough to show the dim outline of a woman's face.

"Who be ye; an' what ye want?" said a cracked voice, intended to be very bold and forbidding, but which betrayed the fear with which the woman was shaking.

"We're friends. Can you tell us where we can find the woman whose little child was lost?" replied Gilroy.

In an instant the door flew wide open and the mother dashed out, nearly capsizing the woman who stood in the door.

"Where is she?" demanded the mother, with a fierceness which almost frightened Rodney.

Before he could reply she sank down upon the steps of the cabin, threw her apron back over her head and began to rock back and forth moaningly:

"Oh, you needn't tell me! She's dead!—dead! Oh, Jean!"

"No! No!" quickly interrupted Gilroy. "She's found! She's all safe, back at the camp, where the doctor is giving her food and medicine. This lad, here, found her."

Rodney half expected that the woman would be profuse in expressions of gratitude at this—at least it was the way they always acted in the stories that he had read.

But she did not. Instead, she became suddenly quiet—almost silent. At last, in a dazed way, she arose from the steps and staggered, in a confused way, toward them.

"Take me there—quick; can't ye?" she demanded.

"Can you ride my horse?" asked Rodney, beginning to dismount.

"No. You ride right along and I'll follow—only hurry up," was the impatient reply.

They did so and she kept close alongside the horses.

As they approached camp Rodney noticed that she seemed to wish to shrink from the sight of the pickets, and he said:

"You needn't be afraid of the soldiers. They're all sorry for you and are glad that your little girl is found."

This thoughtful observation reassured the woman.

As she entered the tent where the child was

quietly sleeping she uttered a low cry and clasped the little girl against her breast with a ferocious way which brought swelling lumps into the throats of the men who chanced to be observers of the touching scene. In spite of his efforts to hide his emotion the tears sprang into Rodney's eyes, and he slipped quietly out of the tent in order to avoid anything like a "scene" which might occur should the woman bethink herself to thank him. To see the inexpressible joy of the mother was thanks enough for him.

On entering their own tent he realized for the first time that day, that he was both desperately hungry and tired.

"Feel pretty well played out?" asked Gilroy in a tone of kindly sympathy.

"Yes sir—rather," replied Rodney, as he settled limply down upon a blanket.

"Well, I don't wonder! I don't suppose you've had more 'n a good stiff smell of anything to eat and you've expended enough energy to require about a dozen ordinary meals. Just as I thought! so I've managed to scare up a chicken—borrowed it—and now you're going to stay right there while I roast it for you."

Rodney attempted to protest against this "swapping places" with Gilroy, but the latter good-naturedly silenced the boy, and the air was soon fragrant with the odor of the roasting fowl.

He could scarcely wait for the operation to be finished, and he ate with an appetite which Gilroy

declared would have done credit to an Indian who had not tasted food for a fortnight and did not expect to for as long again.

"This all makes a mighty good story for me—almost as good as another fight. Folks like to read that kind of thing. They'd shed more tears over that lost child than they would over a dozen dead scouts killed in an open fight—and men who had families depending on them, at that! I'm going to write it up to-night. Yes, sir, it makes a mighty neat little story for the fine women who read that London paper to dim their fashionable eyes over. That's just the place for it!" soliloquized Gilroy.

"But it isn't quite so fine and easy when you're right in it yourself, eh?" he added. Not to speak of! This is the backaching end of the business that makes a fellow willing to forget all about being a hero for the sake of stretching out in a blanket and having eight hours of solid sleep ahead of him. Well—now you just turn in and I'll look after the horses and everything else. All you've got to do is to rest your bones."

This announcement was very comforting to Rodney, who wasted no time in trying to realize that he was a real hero, and had actually rescued a little girl from a fearful death. It was not at all as he had imagined the boy heroes, in the stories he had read, felt. He was almost as much interested in the way in which Gilroy looked at the incident, as in his personal part in it. He thought the matter all over, as he opened his blanket and stretched out his

tired limbs, and determined to read the papers carefully and to ask Gilroy more about it, at the first opportunity.

Although these reflections were made when his eyes were heavy with on-coming sleep, they marked what Gilroy afterwards termed the beginning of "getting his newspaper-eyes open." From that time he saw everything more or less in the light of its news value. Everything became less to him in itself— in its own actuality— and he mentally sorted it into "material," or rejected it because of it failure to be "material." This way of looking at things, he found, had its pleasant and its unpleasant side.

"Rather slim layout, isn't it?" remarked Gilroy, as he surveyed the breakfast on the following morning.

Rodney was somewhat ashamed to look the array of chicken-bones "in the face," for they were gaunt witnesses of the enormity of his appetite on the preceding evening.

"I'll tell you what's the matter. We've got to hustle around and scrape up something to eat, right away quick, or play 'poor Indian' and tighten up our belts. We're in the enemy's country, you know, and 'all's fair in love or war'— at least so far as hen-roosts and pig pens are concerned."

"But isn't foraging forbidden? I thought there was such an order," answered Rodney.

"Oh, yes; there's an order out to that effect as a matter of course; but nobody's expected to pay any attention to it. I'll warrant more than half the

rations of fresh meat that comes from the commissary are raised about here, and aren't paid for either. Of course, the commanders may not know it— but I don't imagine they lay awake nights worrying about! Just you come out with me and I'll show you how the trick's done."

While inwardly debating the right and wrong of this system of "looting" from the enemy, Rodney followed Gilroy in a saunter about the camp.

"There comes one of the boys with a jag of hay. Now we'll just lay low behind these bushes and see him unload."

They did so.

The scout carelessly tossed off the upper portion of the hay, then glanced sharply about to see if he was observed. The coast seemed to be clear, and he made a quick thrust with his arm into the remainder of the hay, and jerked out a sucking pig, which had evidently suffered death from the scout's knife, for it was daubed with fresh blood.

With a deft fling he shot the roastling under the flap of his tent.

"We'll drop in on that fellow in about twenty minutes, and if he don't trot out some of that roast, I'll make him own up to where he got it," said Gilroy, as they wandered aimlessly on.

"See! There comes another jag of hay. Oh haying's good just now. Horses have to have hay, you know, if the men do go hungry," laughed Gilroy, as they waited for the scout to approach.

"Why, that's Lieutenant Johns!" exclaimed Rodney, as the man came nearer.

"That's a fact!" responded Gilroy with elation. "You stay here, Rodney, and I'll go and see if I can get anything out of him. If he's had any luck, I know he'll tell me where to look for some of the same kind of hay."

In a few moments he returned to where he had left Rodney, and said:

"We're all right! I told you the lieutenant would share up with his information. When it begins to get a little dark, we'll make an effort to keep the wolf from the door."

During the day, the thoughts of the proposed foraging expedition was constantly in Rodney's mind, and his reflections upon it were by no means pleasant or satisfactory. Although he had heard some of the scouts advance what seemed, at the time, like very reasonable and logical arguments in support of the justice of an army living upon the products of a people in active rebellion and warfare against the government, he could not help feeling that it was a cruel and pitiable thing to take the cattle, pigs and poultry without recompense from the poor women, who must starve when these scanty possessions were gone.

He at last reached the conclusion, that the only circumstances under which foraging was justifiable, were when those from whom the property was looted were in comfortable circumstances, in which they would never feel in need of the property taken.

"Does the place we're going to belong to one of the poor settlers, or to some one who will never miss what we are going after?" inquired Rodney, as Gilroy told him at evening to get up their horses.

"Oh, it's one of the largest places around here. They could afford to give us each a good beef, and throw in a roasting pig, a turkey and a couple of chickens, and never know the difference," laughed Gilroy. "And besides, they knew that their property was subject to confiscation when they went into the fight. They accepted it as one of the inevitable conditions—now let them abide by it."

Although this partially appeased Rodney's conscientious scruples, he still felt disagreeably like a sneak-thief and plunderer and wished himself well out of the business a dozen times before they approached the prosperous farm where they were to put their plans in operation.

"Now you go up to the house and buy us a jag of hay, but don't pay more than a quarter for it at the most—not if you have to talk all night for it. They'll give it to you for that if you hang on and beat them down long enough. When you get through, come back here."

Rodney went to the house wondering that Gilroy should have so easily abandoned his intention to secure the supplies without bargain and sale.

As Gilroy expected, Rodney was greeted by the watch dog. As soon as he heard this comfortable assurance that the brute's attentions were engaged

with Rodney, Gilroy tied his horse and made a short cut "cross lots" to the sheep fold.

It took him but a moment to select a couple of choice spring lambs and make them victims of his knife before the remainder of the flock was scarcely aware of the presence of an invader.

He tied their heels together, returned to his horse and hung them over the animal's back.

"I guess they'll carry all right there. Now for a side-dish of chicken or turkey, just for variety," he meditated, as he retraced his steps to the buildings.

"That looks to me decidedly like the hen-roost," he again soliloquized, pushing open the door.

The rooster gave a low note of alarm. He paused—just in time to hear voices approaching.

It was Rodney and the hired man coming for the hay. The proprietor was with Riel.

Confound it, I'm in a box now! That boy's too innocent for any earthly use!" were Gilroy's inward exclamations as the voices grew nearer.

Fortunately for the newspaper man, Rodney had chanced to see him slip in the hen house, while the hired man was taking a fresh chew of tobacco from his pouch, and the whole truth had dawned upon him. He quickly determined upon a desperate ruse to allow Gilroy chance to escape, for he felt sure that the dog would at once track the latter to his retreat as soon as it struck its trail.

"Hark!" exclaimed Rodney, "there's something the matter in the sheep fold. Do you suppose anyone's trying to make way with your lambs?"

"Here, Tige!" was the man's only answer. "Go take care of the sheep!"

The dog bounded away with a threatening growl toward the fold.

"I'll look out here and you can go around the other side of the barn, there," again suggested Rodney, with a presumptory decision that the man instantly accepted.

He had no sooner disappeared around the corner of the barn than Rodney stepped close to the hen house door and called, in a low undertone, to Gilroy:

"Now you can get away across the pasture there. But you'll have to be lively."

"All right!" was the quiet answer.

A moment later the lusty squawk of a fowl sent a cold chill through Rodney's nerves. But the sound was quickly nipped into an abrupt "g-l-k" as Gilroy's hand closed its grip about the neck of the unfortunate hen.

"Just for luck!" exclaimed Gilroy, dashing out of the hen house door and flourishing the fowl at Rodney, as he brushed past him and leaped the fence.

He had scarcely gone a dozen rods beyond the fence when the dog, followed by the man, were seen running from the fold.

"There he goes! There he goes!" shouted Rodney, when he saw that the man had caught sight of Gilroy's retreating figure.

"You follow him on foot and I'll go round on my horse," called Rodney.

This served to delay the man for a moment—but not the dog.

The brute lunged ahead, uttering a fierce bay at every leap, while Rodney mounted his horse and galloped down the road as though in greatest haste to cut off Gilroy's retreat.

Meantime he drew his revolver from its holster and prepared to open fire upon the dog when it should seem necessary.

He could see that the dog was gaining upon Gilroy, but the distance between himself and the dog was too great for him to hope for any effect with his revolver.

A sudden splash, followed by a loud exclamation, told Rodney that his partner-in-crime had suffered some sort of a mishap.

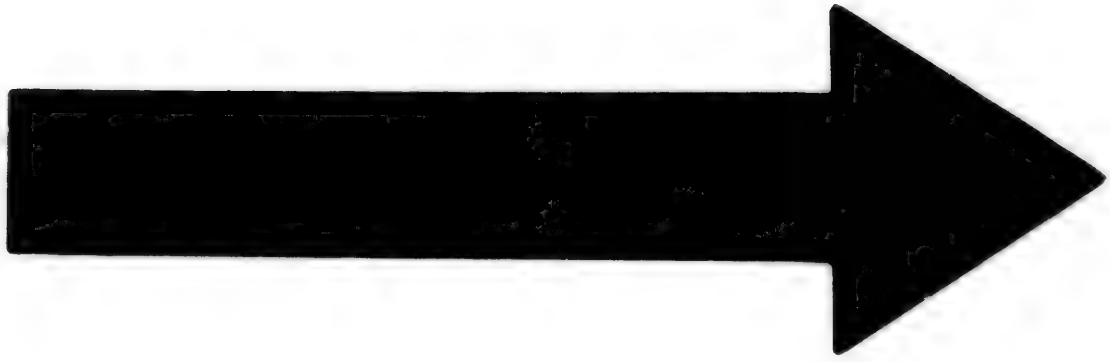
There was evidently no time to lose, and Rodney fired a trio of shots in rapid succession at the dog. One of these evidently chanced to take effect, for dog gave a howl of pain and the hired-man yelled:

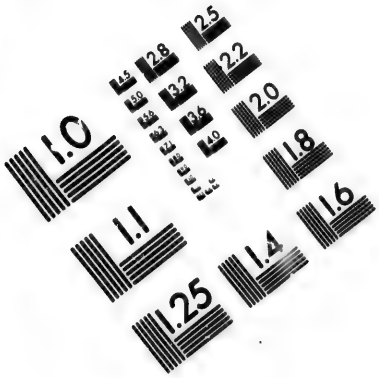
"Let the feller go! Let him go—or you'll kill the dog an' me too."

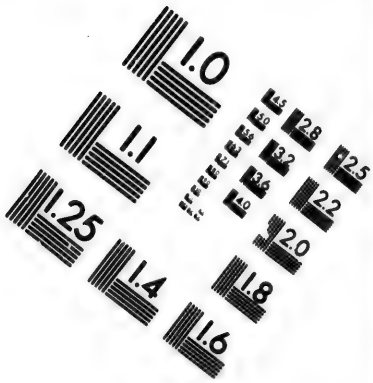
The terrified farm hand then called the dog off, and the courageous brute went limping unwillingly back to a place of safety.

As the hired man disappeared into the distant shadows, Rodney hitched Pink-eye and hastened to Gilroy's assistance.

"Look out!" exclaimed the latter, "Don't you get into the same slew hole that I'm stuck in. I'm most up to my neck here!"







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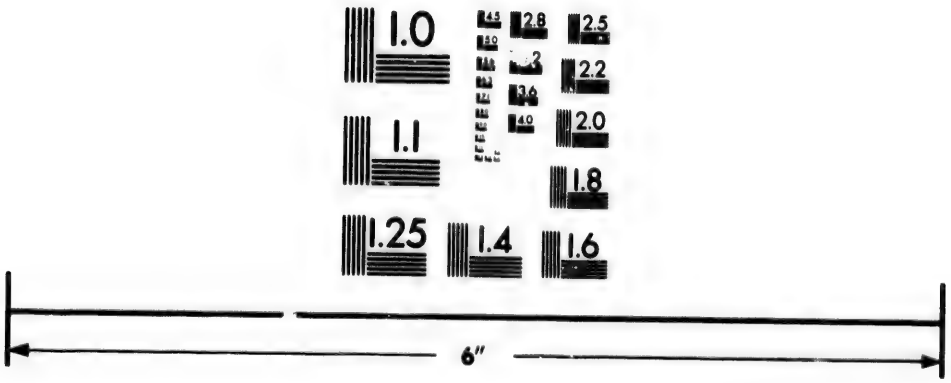

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"But I'm going through, just the same! And I've got that chicken all right, too!—'live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish.'"

Rodney could not contain his amusement at the plight that Gilroy presented on at last making his way on to dry land.

He had fallen flat into the mire, and the entire front of his person was dripping with the thick, black grime of the bog.

Gilroy surveyed himself for a moment, and then joined Rodney in merriment at his own expense.

"You must have swallowed considerable of it," said Rodney.

"Yes," responded Gilroy, "I bit the mud but not the dust. Now we must be getting out of this."

"How's that for high?" he again exclaimed pointing with pride at the two lambs laying in front of his saddle, and enjoying Rodney's surprise at the sight.

When they were again in their own tent, Gilroy retired, while Rodney cleaned his clothes and dressed the lambs and chicken, frequently stopping to shake with laughter at the recollection of the pitiable figure which the representative of the Toronto and London press presented as he crawled out of the mire of the bog, still holding with desperate grip to his looted chicken.

In the morning, as the fragrance of the frying lamb chops which Rodney was turning in the skillet greeted Gilroy, the former suggested:

A FORAGING EXPEDITION.

"Wouldn't that make a mighty good little story for the fine ladies of London to read—just the thing they would like to shed their tears over?"

"Yes," quickly replied Gilroy; "Exactly! But I guess I'll tell it on one of the other boys—just for a change."

They would have exchanged more pleasantries over their ludicrous adventure had not a scout interrupted them with the news that the advance messenger of the reinforcements had arrived, and that the general had issued orders to break camp and proceed at once upon Batosch.

"That means business, and lots of it, too," commented Gilroy. I miss my guess if we don't see more hard fighting there than in all the rest of the trip; for that's Riel's stronghold.

This opinion seemed to be shared by the entire camp, for even the coolest men betrayed a greater degree of anticipation and excitement than Rodney had ever seen them show before.

When Rodney remarked this fact to Gilroy, he replied:

"Certainly. You see Riel is believed to be there himself, and every man, especially of the scouts, fancies that he may stand some chance to capture the big rebel leader and cover himself with glory."

CHAPTER IX.

AN INDIAN AMBUSH.

THE territory from Fish Creek to Batosch was depressingly barren and desolate, much of it having been so burned over that the horses could find only stray patches of thinly sprouting grass.

The grazing was even more scant than along any portion of their previous march from Ft. Qu'Appelle.

This kind of fare had told perceptibly upon the horses, and each day brought their ribs into clearer prominence.

Pink-eye, however, was an exception to this rule, for he had actually "picked up" flesh upon camp diet. For a time this was a puzzle to Rodney, but the mystery was cleared up one morning when he chanced to find the animal smelling about the ashes of an extinct camp fire and picking up bits of the refuse meat, which he devoured as greedily as wolverine.

This thrifty propensity of his shaganappy, however, came very near getting Rodney into trouble.

Early in the morning of the second day out from Fish Creek, Rodney and Gilroy were awakened by a loud voice at the door of their tent.

There stood a scout, with old Pin-keye in tow.

The man was in anything but an amiable mood and breathed out threatenings of slaughter against

the shaganappy provided Rodney did not, in future, keep him securely tethered instead of allowing the freedom of the camp.

"Well, what's the matter? Why don't you tell us what you're kicking about?" demanded Gilroy, of the excited scout.

"We've been missing candles from our tent several times, of late, until I got tired of it and made up my mind to put a stop to it. So last night, after I had just got a fresh ration of them, I put the package under my pillow, which was close against the side of the tent. About half an hour ago I was awakened by something pulling at my hair. Fragments of the paper in which the candles had been wrapped were laying about where my head had rested; but the candles were gone—every last one of 'em! I was sure that it was the work of some pilfering animal. Jumping to my feet, I grabbed my rifle and rushed out of the tent. Just outside of where I had been laying stood this spotted old reprobate, munching the remains of that dozen candles. I grabbed up a stick, that happened to be laying handy by, and was going to lay it onto the thief when the brute turned its heels toward me, laid back his ears and rolled his pink eyes in a way that made me conclude not to meddle with him. After he had finished his meal he allowed me to put a tether on him and lead him here. If he'd nipped a little closer that time he'd have lifted my whole scalp, instead of just taking a stray tuft out of my hair."

Gilroy made no attempt to conceal his amuse-

ment at the fellow's ludicrous fright, and laughed to his face so heartily that the offended scout concluded to make the best of it, and joined Gilroy and Rodney in their fun.

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do," promptly responded Gilroy, as the man was about to leave. "That horse is going to have his liberty the same as the others; and if he's smart enough to forage for himself, all right. If you make no more complaint about the horse, well and good; but if you want to make any bother I'll give the whole thing away to the boys and they'll get more comfort out of it than you will—you may depend upon that."

The man seemed to take the same view of the matter, after a moment's reflection, for he replied:

"All right. We'll let it drop at that."

"He'd better!" was Gilroy's comment to Rodney, as the scout turned upon his heel and walked away, "for if the boys once get hold of that they'll call him 'candles' till the war's over, and will make life a burden to him generally.

* * * * *

"Here we are! See the steeple of the old church! And down in the valley beyond is Batosch" exclaimed Gilroy to Rodney, on the third day's march from Fish Creek.

The quaint old cathedral stood on the high bank, overlooking the village, which nestled close to the turbid Saskatchewan.

The troops took a position on the eminence to the left of the church, while almost in front of them

was a deep ravine, which opened into the valley near the village.

Adjacent to the church was the old burial ground, with its picturesque cross standing guard over its consecrated soil.

Interest was quickly centered upon the array of wigwams which stood in plain view upon the other bank of the Saskatchewan, opposite the town.

Before the troops had fairly pitched camp an eighteen-pound gun was trained upon the Indian encampment, and poured a volley of shells into it. This had an instant and telling effect. Squaws, bearing papooses and every sort of domestic utensil, could be seen retreating in the greatest confusion.

Rodney also noticed that there were but few men to be seen, and those did not have on their war paint.

He took this as a sign that the warriors were absent in some other section, and he was almost disappointed at the thought that they would see nothing of Indian fighting.

Meantime, the commanders were taking a careful survey of the land.

"A few of you scouts go down into the ravine and see if it's occupied," was the general's command.

"Want to go with 'em?" said Gilroy, turning to Rodney.

"Yes," was the boy's eager reply.

"I don't believe there's any particular danger—at least, the captain don't seem to think there is. We'll chance it anyway."

Accordingly they joined the little squad of scouts, which descended into the wooded ravine. It seemed as quiet and deserted save for the birds which occasionally chirped and fluttered in the branches.

Lieutenant Johns was too skillful a scout, however, to proceed without due caution; and he had his men hitch their ponies in a sheltered spot, accessible to the trail leading back to camp.

Then they carefully picked their way along through the thick timber without exchanging a word with each other.

After exploring the portion of the ravine toward the village, they retraced their course, passed their horses, and reconnoitered a short distance in the opposite direction.

Rodney thought how splendidly romantic and exciting it was to be stealing stealthily through the woods, in search of a hidden foe, in real warfare; and he resolved to give the boys back at the fort, a full account of the experience. Just as he was picturing how intently they would listen to his recital, he caught sight of a single figure on the opposite side of the ravine.

He touched Gilroy's arm and pointed at the sentinel.

At that moment the command echoed through the ravine:

"Retire : scouts !"

How warlike it sounded, and how it would appeal to the boys!

The little company of scouts wheeled about, and were leisurely walking toward their horses, when suddenly, like an electric shock, the first war-cry of Indians that Rodney had ever heard, smote his ears, and made him chill and quiver with excitement.

"Down! And break for your horses!" was the lieutenant's informal order.

There was small need for a command to crouch low, for the instinct of self-preservation would have dictated that, as the crack of rifles from the ambush, in the thickest portion of the timber, followed the war-cry.

The bullets whizzed and screamed over the heads of the scouts, and Rodney, for an instant, fancied himself wounded, as a ball tore a splinter from a dry stub close beside him, hurled it against his arm.

In his previous adventures, Rodney had not had the feeling that he would be shot. But even after discovering that it was a harmless sliver, instead of a ball, which had brushed against his arm, he experienced, for some moments, the keenest fear. It seemed to him, as he crouched down and dodged from the cover of one tree to another, that he would surely be the victim of one of the balls which poured from the invisible guns of the hidden savages, whose ghastly war-cry still mingled with the crackling discharge of their rifles.

This fear intensified into a morbid despair when he saw that to reach their horses, they must leave he cover of the timber, and cross an open which

was only sparsely studded with clumps of small bushes and undergrowth.

Upon coming to this clearing, Lieutenant Johns, who was in the lead, dropped upon his hands and knees, snatched his knife from his belt, placed it between his teeth, and crawled rapidly over the rough ground toward the horses.

Every member of the party instantly followed his example.

How slowly the crawling line seemed to move! As a bullet buried itself in the ground a few feet beyond him, the likeness of their situation, to the perils which he had encountered in nightmares, came to him, but without that second-consciousness which always gave him in the dreams, a comforting though shadowy assurance that he would waken into safety just before the fatal calamity should overtake him.

But this feeling vanished when he reached the tree to which old Pink-eye was hitched, cut the strap and leaped into the saddle.

Many of the other horses were plunging so furiously that their owners could scarcely release and mount them; consequently Rodney was among those who lead the plunge up the trail, almost directly in front of the Indians' ambush.

In the saddle, with his tried and faithful horse under him, leaping forward with the swift strides that had carried him into safety on other occasions of danger, his old courage returned to him, and he was conscious of no little shame at the thought of

the fear which he had entertained when crawling behind the bushes.

It was a more desperate undertaking to attempt to run the gauntlet of the Indians' rifle-pits, when upon their horses and fully exposed to their fire, than it had been to skulk behind the trees and bushes; but Rodney did not shrink from the charge.

The little posse of scouts had gone but a few rods, and had still the most dangerous part of their ride before them, when another surprise greeted them.

It was the belching of the gatling gun under charge of Captain Young. He pushed steadily forward to the relief of the scouts, until in the very face of the savages. The constant and deadly fire of the gatling accomplished the captain's purpose by throwing the Indians into momentary confusion, in the interval of which the scouts made a successful dash past the braves into the shelter of the timber and up the trail, where they soon joined the remainder of their company.

"Well, we're out of the woods this time!" exclaimed Lieutenant Johns to Captain French, as they rode together toward the general's headquarters.

"Yes," replied the latter, "but we've got to fight it out there sooner or later, for the enemy must be dislodged from that ravine before we can take the town. And it'll be a nasty fight, too, for it's just the place that suits a sneaking Indian to do his best work in. He can hide in the thick timber and shoot

without being seen—and that's meat to a Red skin."

This prophecy in regard to another engagement in the ravine was verified not long after by the command of Colonel Williams:

"You scouts go down yonder and do some good."

Meantime Rodney had been suffering from a repentant recollection of his fright, which seemed to him, upon calm and conscientious self-examination, so much like outright cowardice that he determined to retrieve his self-respect at the first opportunity.

He therefore hailed the order to again enter the ravine with more of joy than regret.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER DOUBLE FIRE.

RODNEY'S resolutions to acquire himself with courage was called into severe and immediate action, for in order to reach the place of vantage necessary to fire with any effect upon the Indians, the scouts were obliged to descend into the ravine in the face of a steady fire from the secreted Indians, whose rifle pits were carefully planted through the thickest of the timber and up the steep bank on the opposite side.

To deliberately advance against such a sure and steady fire without the opportunity to return a single shot required the most unflinching kind of courage.

The Indians had built their rifle pits with such cunning and skill that they could fire from out narrow cracks and through small crevices without exposing themselves in the least.

When at last Captain French had succeeded in leading his men to the position from which he hoped to secure at least a partial view of the enemy, he found himself foiled and disappointed. Not a single Indian could be seen. On the other hand, the scouts were in direct range for the rifles of the Indians.

Each man picked out the largest tree or stump that was accessible and stationed himself behind it.

Some were fortunate enough to get behind fallen trees which formed excellent breastworks.

Among these were Gilroy and Rodney.

They had scarcely settled down comfortably behind their natural fortification when Gilroy began to shake with laughter. Pointing to their right he exclaimed, between paroxysms of mirth.

"Just look at 'The Fat Man From Assinaboia,' over there trying to screen himself behind the smallest tree in the whole grove. There's the irony of fate for you! The biggest, broadest, fattest man in the whole company pitted behind a tree that would hardly shelter the slimest man in the camp! See him twist and turn to see whether he will expose the narrowest margin of himself when standing edgewise or squarely facing the enemy!"

Even in the presence of the danger that they and the fleshy scout were facing, Gilroy and Rodney laughed at the fellow's predicament until they were sore.

When their first amusement at the ridiculous spectacle was over Gilroy added seriously:

"They'll hit him yet if he don't get out of there. It's simply a question of the tree being too narrow and the man too wide. He might better drop and crawl for a better shelter."

Rodney's attention was next drawn to a party of half-a-dozen scouts who, like Gilroy and himself, had been lucky enough to get behind a large, prostrate tree.

"See! What are they doing there?" inquired Rodney.

Gilroy watched the men in silence for a few moments and then replied :

"They're passing Captain Young's cap from one to another in order to fool the Indians. He did some tall fighting against them in putting down the Minnesota uprising, and they remember him and are after his head. You just notice that whenever that cap bobs up it draws the fire of the Indians every time.

It required but a brief observation to demonstrate this to Rodney.

The scouts had fired but few shots, for the Redskins were so well concealed that it was only at rare intervals that the slightest glimpse of them was to be had.

At last the delay seemed to become intolerable to the scouts, who were subjected to a constant fusillade from the Indians. This helpless and impotent situation seemed to prey especially upon the impetuous Irish nature of Captain French, who was kneeling behind a stump. Exasperated and maddened to the pitch of frenzy, the dashing captain leaped from his shelter and stood out in fair view while he shook his fist at the Indians, and with the strongest oaths in his soldier's vocabulary called upon the Indians to come out and fight like men.

Talk about there not being an Irish language! Just listen to that, will you!" exclaimed Gilroy, "there isn't a pilot on the Mississippi who could pay that back in like coin!"

The Captain's reckless exposure was the signal for a rattling discharge of rifles from the pits.

"Well if that don't beat all the fool things that I ever saw!" commented Gilroy, as the Captain at last dropped behind his stump, unharmed. "I should have thought he would have a dozen bullets in him by this time."

Rodney's thoughts were divided between speculations upon the almost miraculous escape of the foolhardy man and wondering how long they would be held in so exasperating a position, when the shrill scream of a ball made both Gilroy and himself instinctively dodge down closer to the ground.

Without saying a word Rodney placed his finger beside the spot where a bullet from behind them had imbedded itself in the near surface of the log not a foot from either of them.

"Great Heavens! our troops up in the old grave yard are taking us for half breeds! That comes of scouts dressing like heathens. We'll have to be getting out of here lively or there won't be enough left of us to tell the tale!"

This conviction must have revealed itself almost simultaneously to the Captain's, for the command to retreat was soon sounded.

As Rodney scrambled to his feet he heard a sharp cry of pain near at hand followed by the exclamation:

"I've got it, boys!"

"Where is the fellow?" inquired Gilroy as they paused and looked about them.

"There he is—the fat man!" answered Rodney, pointing to the prostrate man who was endeavoring to crawl toward them.

"Here! We must carry him on our rifles—this way You go to his feet and I'll carry the heavy end," ordered Gilroy, as he slipped the guns under the wounded man.

"Now up with him. Hee-o-hee!" continued Gilroy as though directing a gang of men at a barn raising.

They staggered forward with their heavy burden, while the bullets from both directions were singing over their heads.

"Can you hold out a little longer—just 'till we catch up on the rest of the lads a little more?" called back Gilroy from his position in advance.

Although he had begun to feel that he could scarcely go another rod without dropping his end of the burden, the question put new strength into Rodney's limbs and he answered:

"Yes, I'm all right."

"Wish those ninnies up in the grave-yard there were down here under this double fire for a few minutes!" sententiously observed Gilroy as a ball from the troops whizzed especially close to them.

After going several rods more, Rodney was on the point of telling Gilroy that he could go no further without a pause for rest, when he heard behind him the same fearful war whoop of the Indians that had struck such terror through him on his previous adventure in the ravine.

"Lads! the Redskins are charging! Drop me and save yourselves—you can't save me!" suddenly exclaimed the wounded comrade.

"No!"

"Not to speak of!" were the answers with which Rodney and Gilroy respectively met this suggestion.

As the other scouts heard the war cry of the Indians and saw that they were coming out of their hiding places, the temptation to pause in their retreat, under the double fire of friend in front, and enemy in the rear, to turn upon the Redskins and give them a few shots, was too strong to be resisted.

Seeing Gilroy and Rodney carrying the scout, a squad of comrades immediately surrounded them.

Two of this welcome re-inforcement relieved the "newspaper brigade" of its burden, while the others surrounded the disabled man to defend him in case the Indians pressed their charge.

Captains French and Young stood their ground with eager resolution so long as an Indian had the hardihood to expose himself in the least to their fire. But as soon as the savages reached the ground originally occupied by the scouts, where the balls from the troops in the grave yard were thickest, they came to a halt.

Numerous bullets from the same source, however, still fell among the government scouts, and the order to retreat was again reluctantly given.

The dash into the open spot, where they could be plainly seen by their friends in the grave-yard, was the most disastrous portion of the retreat, and for a few moments both the Indians and the regulars poured a savage fire upon them, thinning their ranks as rapidly as the half-breeds had done at Fish Creek.

It made Rodney sick at heart to listen to the groans of the wounded, and the awful brutality of war came home to him with a force that left a lasting impression upon his mind.

He stayed near the disabled man whom Gilroy and he had carried, and had the satisfaction of seeing the sufferer borne into the clearing without further injuries. Their entry into the center of the open had the effect of first drawing upon them a brisk volley from the grave-yard detachment. Although it was of but momentary duration, it made sad havoc among the scouts; but the abruptness with which the firing ceased, told the unfortunate company in the ravine that the troops had at last identified them as friends and that the principal danger was now over.

Rodney expected that the scouts would hold the occupants of the grave-yard to strictest account and regard them with a bitter enmity; but he discovered his mistake as soon as the two parties met.

The scouts accepted the mistake as a very natural one, for their dress was similar to that of the half-breeds, and their faces could not have been distinguishable from so great a distance.

"It's hard enough to be under one fire, but when it comes to having friends double it, that's a little more than I bargained for, and I don't propose to be caught in that kind of a trap again—not if I know it!" good-naturedly grumbled Gilroy, as he and Rodney sat about their camp-fire, over which their supper was cooking, that evening.

"But you wouldn't know it, in the first place, and if you did, it wouldn't be like you to keep out of any fight, no matter how dangerous," replied Rodney.

Gilroy laughed at this outspoken remark in a way which indicated his pleasure, both at Rodney's candor and the compliment to his courage, which the lad's remark implied.

The difference in position, age and experience between the boy and his employer had rapidly diminished under the close intimacy of camp life and mutual dangers which they had shared, until both seemed to forget their business relations and become only companions. This was the more possible from the fact that Gilroy retained his boyishness to an unusual degree, while Rodney was daily making strides of sudden advancement in wordly experience.

CHAPTER XI.

CAMP SCENES.

HOW would you like to come along with me over to the captain's tent? I'm going for a little talk with him on the general state of things before writing up my account of to-day's engagement."

"Certainly; I would like to very much, if it would not be an intrusion," Rodney answered eagerly, for despite the exciting activities about him, the boy's interest had been thoroughly aroused upon the question of newspaper work, and his mind was keenly alert to grasp every fresh detail concerning it. He had constantly cherished since listening to Gilroy's first account of the wonders of a great modern newspaper "plant," the determination to revive the subject and learn all that Gilroy could tell him of the mental as well as mechanical process of preparing a metropolitan daily for its readers.

As they walked together toward Captain French's tent, the thought came to him that probably no department of newspaper work was more picturesque and interesting than that in which Gilroy was engaged, and he determined to keep his eyes open and let no feature of it escape him. This was no idle impulse of the moment, but an intelligent appreciation of the practical value of the

experiences through which he was passing and the intuition that, in order to appropriate their value to himself and turn it to the greatest personal account, he must not only make a close observation of the scenes of each day, but also grasp the method by which the war correspondent converted them into news, thus cultivating by observation and study of Gilroy's work the judgment necessary to select from all the facts and scenes those which were worthy to be utilized as news.

When they arrived at the Captain's tent he received them with genuine Irish cordiality and dismissed all other business to devote his entire attention to his newspaper guests.

Rodney carefully noticed every question which Gilroy put to the Captain and the answers—sometimes frank and profuse, sometimes short and evasive—which that officer returned.

The drift of these questions was soon apparent to Rodney. It was clear to him that Gilroy was seeking to learn whether any information concerning the whereabouts of the rebel chief had been gained. But if such information was in possession of Captain French then he was clever enough to give out the impression that he was as ignorant as the newspaper correspondent himself as to where Riel was intrenched.

"Do *you* think there will be anything in particular doing to-morrow?" inquired Gilroy.

"No; I think not—just a little skirmishing around the edges. I think the General's plan is to let up

up for a day, in order to get a good ready to charge the town. Or, as the Irishman puts it, he proposes to spit on his hands in order to get a better hold."

"Well; that'll give me a good chance to get off my specials, then."

"And that means another ride to the station for you," he added, turning to Rodney.

As they arose to go, the Captain seemed to drop the official character which he had maintained during the interview, and laying his hand upon Gilroy's shoulder he exclaimed.

"My boy! I feel that I'm going to come out of this all right and get back my old place and standing."

"I hope so Captain, but you know there's many a slip, and-so-forth" was Gilroy's reply.

"Yes: we can't most always tell. But I'm bound to get reinstated if there's such a thing in the cards! And win it out of their very teeth, too!"

"But for goodness sake, French, don't do another fool thing like the way you stood out in front of those Indians in the ravine and invited them to shoot at you. You'll just throw your life away by such useless recklessness, next time."

With this reproving speech the two friends separated.

On their way back to their own tent, Rodney inquired:

"What did Captain French mean by getting his old place back out of their teeth?"

"He does seem to feel cut up over that yet,"

mused Gilroy aloud, as though he had already answered Rodney's question.

"Oh, I'll tell you about that," he resumed, after a momentary pause. "The Captain used to hold a good position in the mounted police. Their regulations are very strict, and an officer who has a mind to can find occasion to discipline anyone under him without half trying. French failed to please his commander in some way and was discharged. He claims that his dismissal was unjust, and I believe it was. So he's determined to distinguish himself by special bravery in this insurrection, and win back his old place as a reward. It'll be too bad if he don't, for his heart's set on it—poor fellow!"

This information shed a new light upon the conduct and character of the genial and brilliant Irish officer, which multiplied their fascination in Rodney's eyes, and made them appear far more dramatic, not to say pathetic, in his eyes. As he thought the matter over before dropping into sleep, his impatience grew upon him to know the result of the events which would soon determine whether the Captain's ambition would be gratified or denied.

In the morning, as he had expected, Gilroy was ready with the dispatches, and after a hasty breakfast Rodney leaped into his saddle and was off for the telegraph station.

He stopped Pink-eye, after having made a start of a few rods, to ask of Gilroy permission to read the specials. This was cheerfully granted, and he then allowed the shaganappy, which had had but

little riding for a couple of days, to break into a brisk canter. He knew that the hardy animal would hold this "gait" hour after hour, and bring him back to camp again much sooner than Gilroy expected, providing no adventure or calamity detained them.

As Pink-eye loped steadily and easily forward, he read the pages of Gilroy's dispatch without difficulty, for there was a bold, sharp freedom in correspondent's "hand-writing," which rendered it almost as distinct as print.

The scene of the previous day seemed strangely heroic when viewed through the article. The narrative gave him a broader and more complete understanding of the entire situation of which the adventures in the ravine, which had seemed so all-important to Rodney, were but episodes.

"Well, I could come nearer to writing an account like that now than before reading this dispatch, and I'm going to write up the next engagement myself, just to see what I can do with it," mused Rodney, after having delivered the special and began his backward journey, which was accomplished without any incidents of special interest.

There was no lack of excitement in the camp, however, for it had become generally understood that the following day would be devoted to a charge upon Batosch.

"Why wouldn't Captain French tell you outright whether or not he knew anything about where Riel is believed to be?" asked Rodney, as Gilroy and himself rolled up in their blankets that evening.

"Because he didn't want me or anyone else to think he suspects where Riel is to be found. It is his ambition to capture the big rebel himself, and in that matter he has every man in the service for a rival. He'd risk his life a dozen times for the mere chance of bagging Riel."

The camp was astir early and Gilroy was about headquarters, "getting the lay of the land," as he told Rodney.

"We'll follow French, for he'll be where Riel is if the fellow is anywhere in the town," he added.

Consequently they cast their lot with the dashing Irish captain, although knowing that he would be foremost in every available danger.

Before the forces were ready for the charge Rodney rode alone to the picket line nearest the church, looking idly for something of interest to "turn up."

The rifles held this advance position.

Rodney sat on his shaganappy beside one of these handsome young fellows, when the latter suddenly exclaimed:

"Now I see him, the dare-devil rascal! He's been cutting off our men steadily; but I guess it's about his last trick!" And with this the rifleman brought his repeater to his shoulder.

At first glance it appeared to Rodney that the rifleman was aiming into mid-air; but a swift glance along the barrel of the arm revealed the fact that it was headed upon the figure of a man upon the belfrey of the church.

A moment after the white smoke puffed from the muzzle of the gun and the sharpshooter reeled from his lofty perch and went careering down, headforemost to the ground.

Although the comrades of the rifleman congratulated him upon his brilliant shot, and the man seemed to consider it with the same cool pride that he would have done had his victim been a turkey instead of a human being, Rodney could not catch this spirit, and the ghastly sight lingered in his mind after he had turned back to join Gilroy.

'The scouts are going down into the ravine again' into the rifle pits which were constructed last night. I suppose we might as well go with them" was Gilroy's greeting.

"Yes, sir, responded Rodney, who did not really relish the announcement with quite the enthusiasm that his promptness indicated.

They joined Lieutenant Johns' detachment, and went down into the ravine, under a brisk fire from the enemy.

Many of the pits were already occupied, and they were obliged to scatter into such of them as were not entirely full. As usual Gilroy and Rodney contrived to find a place together.

"Well; this is a little more comfortable fighting than previous occasions have afforded in the ravine. Nothing like having something in front of a fellow when facing a fire from Indians and Half Breeds!" philosophized Gilroy.

"Yes; it's a good deal better than being under a cross fire," admitted Rodney.

Hour after hour passed until the intermittent discharge of rifles at the ambushed rebels, who blocked the ravine between the scouts and the town, grew almost monotonous.

In a moment of unusual quiet the sound of distant cheering reached the ears of Rodney, who exclaimed:

"Hark! What's that?"

"That's the yell of the Midland Rifles. They're charging the town! Come—let's get out of this, lively! I want to be on hand as soon as they enter the village, if possible," exclaimed Gilroy excitedly.

Then came the call for the scouts to hasten along the trail past the old church and through the timber to the town.

"We're with you!" replied Lieutenant Johns, also leaping from the rifle-pit and joining the newspaper scouts in their dash toward the other troops.

"Now for it boys!" was the greeting of Captain French, who stood waiting with the remainder of his company on the bank of the ravine, eager for the crucial charge, in which he hoped to win, by gallant fighting, the coveted restoration to his old rank in the mounted police.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROUT OF THE REBELS.

FROM the intense excitement of those about him Rodney divined that the supreme moment of the insurrection had come in the charge upon the Rebel stronghold of Batosch, and he also was impressed with the fact that somehow it was to be a great day in the life of Captain French, who had been much in his thoughts since hearing Gilroy's interesting account of the captain's career.

No sooner had they passed on through the timber than they saw the Midland Rifles a short distance beyond, making a dashing descent upon the village.

The Half Breeds and their allies, however, were hotly contesting every rod of their way, and pouring a cutting fire into the troops.

They were met by several litters upon which the wounded were being carried back to a place of safety. It wrung Rodney's heart to even glance at the poor fellows, but there was no time to pause.

He determined to keep close to Captain French at all hazards, for not only did the unfinished drama of the man's life hold him with a more powerful fascination than the most thrilling story that he had ever read, but he also realized that the outcome of the man's part in that day's battle would form a most

interesting chapter in the conflict in which every personal detail and incident would be of value to Gilroy.

Although it was the work of but a few minutes to dislodge the Rebels from the village and drive them to the table land close to the water's edge, it seemed a long time to Rodney.

Men fell in the death agonies close about him, but he seemed to have but one thought—to keep near Captain French. This he did at the cost of many reckless exposures, for the captain was at the front of the fight, and seemed to court rather than avoid danger.

It was with a thrill of pleasure that, as Rodney came alongside the captain, in front of a blacksmith shop, from which a squad of Rebels had but just been routed, the officer recognized him and exclaimed:

"Lad, this is no place for you. Better go back where it isn't so infernal hot!"

Rodney was fearful that this request was to be made pre-emptory, but if this had been the captain's intention it was suddenly changed by the course of events.

As Rodney was listening to the commander's words, he saw the lower sash of a window in the neighboring saloon suddenly lift high enough for the person manipulating it to thrust the butt of a beer bottle beneath it. Through the opening thus made the barrel of a rifle appeared, pointing directly at the captain.

Rodney's first thought was to strike the captain's

horse a blow which should make the animal leap forward and allow the ball to pass harmlessly behind the victim for whom it was intended. But a glance showed him that he could not reach the horse. There was but one alternative.

Instantly bringing his rifle to his shoulder he aimed it as best he could for a spot just in range with the protruding rifle and fired.

The report of his own gun was followed by a puff of smoke from the muzzle of the other rifle, and a ball shrieked over the captain's shoulder.

The hand which had held the rifle in the window seemed to have suddenly dropped from its hold, for the end of the Winchester's barrel swung slightly to and from, with a side motion, as though held in place only by the sash and casing of the window.

Rodney, with a mixed pang of regret and throb of pride, realized that his shot must have been fatal, no doubt having struck the Rebel in the forehead. It was this thought which filled him with regret, for even in the heat of an engagement he could not rid himself of the feeling that it was a terrible thing to take a human life. But he met this accusing thought with the recollection that he had fired the shot to save the life of a brave man.

When, in the instant following the shots, he again heard the voice of the captain, he expected that it was addressed to him, perhaps in some recognition of what he had just done.

But instead he heard a ringing command to charge and clean out the saloon building.

It was with a sense of almost personal injury that Rodney saw that the captain had either not seen the danger from which the lucky shot had delivered him or had deliberately dismissed the acknowledgment of it to some more convenient time.

When the last refugee in the saloon had either escaped or been shot down, the scouts pressed on after the main body of the Rebels in the outskirts of the village.

As they came in front of a large sightly frame house, which occupied an elevation somewhat higher than the neighboring residences, Captain French quickly entered it.

Rodney paused by the door, and could hear the quick footsteps of the officer running up the stairs.

After a moment of indecision, Rodney concluded to wait outside.

Although the firing in that immediate locality had nearly ceased, he did not forget that the exercise of caution was still necessary; for there was no telling what house or thicket might still be shelter for a desperate and determined enemy.

Just as he came cautiously around the corner of the house, he saw the gleam of a rifle aimed through the crotch of a low orchard tree. Before he could bring his own gun to his shoulder the smoke curled from the muzzle of the Winchester, and its report echoed against the side of the building.

It had not escaped Rodney's attention that the man's aim had been high, no doubt at the chamber window.

He was not conscious of the near presence of any person other than the Rebel sharpshooter until startled by the crack of a rifle just behind him. In a glance he saw the Rebel fall backward.

"Settled his hash didn't I?" were the words which greeted him from Lieutenant Johns, as he turned about and saw the officer ejecting the exploded shell from his rifle.

"Yes; Captain French went upstairs a few moments ago; I'm afraid he's shot," was Rodney's brief answer.

"Come; let's go up. But I hate to like sin. Somehow it seems to me that fellow had a mighty good aim, across that rest. Great heaven! if I could only have been there about one minute before!"

Rodney's super-sensitiveness interpreted this as a rebuke of his own indecision and it rankled keenly as he followed the lieutenant up the stairway and into the first chamber, the door of which stood slightly ajar.

Even the lieutenant gave an involuntary moan at the sight of the dead body of his captain, which lay stretched upon the floor.

Rodney was strangely affected by the sight. It seemed to him like the death of a personal friend.

They together took up the body and carried it down the staircase and out of the door.

The main body of the scouts, among whom was Gilroy, was just passing.

In a moment they surrounded their dead leader.

"Get a wagon and we will take him back to

camp," ordered Lieutenant Johns. "The regulars have the Rebels on the run, out of town, anyway.'

When the wagon arrived they tenderly placed the body in the center of it and then seated themselves around it.

The ride back to camp was a very solemn and impressive one to Rodney. Few words were passed over the body of their dead companion, Lieutenant Johns giving a brief account of shooting the Rebel and finding Captain French. In addition to the ambulances bearing their own dead and wounded, which they encountered on the way, there were numerous Red River carts—rude, lumbering two-wheeled affairs, bound together with strips of shaganappy rawhide, without a nail in their entire construction—piled with the bodies of dead Half Breeds. The feet of the latter protruded out of the rear of the short carts as stiffly as though they were so many pieces of cord-wood. To add to the grotesqueness of the spectacle the carts creaked a monotonous, doleful wailing, which would have evoked a round of laughter from the most serious observer under any other circumstances.

As he watched the carts with their humble dead, hauled along behind wasted shaganappies, he could not but think that had his father not died he might have been among one of those loads of Rebel dead.

After the scouts had cared for the body of Captain French as best they could, Rodney and Gilroy had found themselves once more together where

they could talk over the occurrences of the hours since they had become separated.

Under spur of Gilroy's questions, Rodney gave him a detailed account of the scenes of which he had been the witness.

"Well; I shall have to depend almost wholly upon the features of the engagement which you have seen, for they are by far the most important; and what is more, you have remembered and told just those things which are real live 'material' for a newspaper man," said Gilroy, and finally added:

"Now suppose we follow up the troops for a way and then go over through the Indian camp. There may be some scenes worth describing over there."

Accordingly they followed the course of the troops for a sufficient distance to see that the Rebels had been thoroughly routed. Then they crossed the river to the Indian camp.

"You might go up that side of the camp and notice everything you can see, while I do the same by this side, and we'll meet up at the other end and come along back through the center together," said Gilroy, as they halted their horses in front of the broken array of tepees.

Rodney immediately acted upon this suggestion. On every hand were the most pathetic reminders of the devastation which the gatling gun and smaller arms had wrought. Occasionally a squaw could be seen moving stolidly about among the deserted tepees, giving him vengeful side-long glances out of twinkling black eyes.

But no incident of the moment occurred until he heard the voice of a squaw, some distance ahead, talking in excited but pleading tones.

He put spurs to old Pink-eye and pushed rapidly forward until he reached the scene of the disturbance.

The sight which met his eyes aroused his anger as nothing in all his life had before done.

Beside a dead warrior knelt a soldier, who was rapidly stripping from the brave's limbs the superbly beaded leggins and moccasins, while the squaw was pleading, in the most impassioned voice and gestures, with the wretch to stop his heartless sacrilege.

Rodney knew that any kind of pleading, expostulation or threats would be useless, and that a being depraved enough to commit so cruel an outrage against every human instinct would be desperate enough to take the life of anyone who should excite his anger by attempting to interfere with his work of plunder or bring him to account for it. Therefore Rodney instantly drew his revolver upon the man and said:

"Hands up! Stir and I will drop you."

Although the words were spoken in a quiet way, there was a force of determination in them which could not fail to convince the soldier of the boy's earnestness and courage; and he obeyed as promptly as though he were being "held up" by a masked highwayman.

Rodney then shouted to Gilroy, and in a few moments the latter rode up with the question:

"HANDS UP!"

"What's up now?" plainly speaking in his astonished countenance.

"This fellow was stripping the finery from the body of that warrior in the very eyes of the squaw and in spite of her pleadings."

"The brute! We'll let the old general deal with him!" exclaimed Gilroy, his lips white with honest indignation.

"Now get up and march," he ordered, addressing the culprit, who yielded a surly obedience to the command.

They went at once before the general, a short, stout man, with heavy, white military moustache and dignified bearing, who ordered Rodney to tell his story.

The boy related the incident in a brief, modest and matter-of-fact way, and concluded by saying:

"I think he has one of the moccasins in his pocket now."

"Search him," commanded the general.

He was obeyed by the two guards, into whose custody the soldier had been given.

Not only did they take from his pockets the beaded moccasin, but also a quantity of silver trinkets of the sort most worn by the Indians and Half Breeds.

"Keep him under close guard. We'll give him his courtmartial trial in the morning."

As they were now in command of telegraphic connections at Batosch, Rodney had no long courier's journey to make, and therefore had more of an op-

portunity to observe Gilroy's preparation of the dispatches. He was pleased to see that the specials contained every detail which he had furnished to Gilroy, and in nearly the same sequence and words in which he had told them.

It was nearly morning when the last of the long dispatches were off, and the correspondent and his assistant had contrived to catch only a couple of hours' sleep, when they were aroused by a messenger from the general, summoning them to the court-martial trial of the plundering soldier.

When they had concluded their testimony, the man received the severest discipline with which his offense was punishable, and the general issued the order that any similar depredations would promptly meet the same discipline.

"Who were you talking with when I was giving my testimony?" inquired Rodney of Gilroy, as they walked back to their tent together.

"Houri, the government interpreter. I believe that fellow knows exactly where Riel is hiding. I wish you could keep around near him, and perhaps you may be able to pick up a clue from some remark that he may drop."

Charged with this delicate and important mission Rodney set out for the tent to which Gilroy directed him, determined to accomplish it if possible.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AT THE CAPTURE.

"DID you make out anything?" inquired Gilroy of Rodney, as the latter returned to their tent with rather a disappointed countenance.

"Not a thing! couldn't catch a single word. But I did manage to strike up an acquaintance with young Houri, the interpreter's son."

"That's right! You'll get more from that lead than from a week's listening. Just you cultivate him a little and I believe he will give the thing away—if he has anything to give," exclaimed Gilroy, with hopeful animation.

"Very well. I'll do the best I can," replied Rodney.

As a result of this resolution the young Half Breed and Rodney were together much of the time during the next two days, which were spent on the march. They were very congenial to each other and Rodney listened with delight to the young Houri's accounts of the adventures of himself and his father.

On the other hand the Half Breed drew from Rodney the story of his life and seemed to admire the boy's modest and manly "grit" in his fight to secure the clean title to a home for his mother, and to lift from her the burden of poverty.

"Come around after supper," he called to Rodney,

as the moving columns broke up for camp on the evening of the second day out from Batosch.

Rodney was careful to keep this invitation and found his friend in an unusual mood, alternating between dreamful abstraction and restless excitement. He was not inclined to say much for some time, but finally said: "Let's take a stroll." This remark was made with the air of one who had at last reached the final decision of some vexatious question.

When they were well out of hearing from all others, Houri stopped abruptly, looked sharply into Rodney's face and then asked:

"Merton, can you keep a secret from *ererybody*, even from Gilroy?"

This was a turn in affairs for which Rodney was not prepared. Any pledge of secrecy that he might give must be kept to the letter and spirit. At the same time Gilroy would expect that any information which Rodney might gain would be his property. Would it not be better to refuse the information upon the condition named and trust to picking it up in some other way? Then came the thought:

"If he is going to tell me where Riel is hiding it is for the purpose of having me accompany him in attempting the capture. Why not accept the condition of secrecy and go with him, and if the attempt is successful the information can afterward be given to Gilroy.

"Certainly, I will tell no one," he replied.

"Very well! I have learned the exact cabin

where Louis Riel is hiding. Not even my father knows that—although he has a general idea of the neighborhood in which Louis is now located. You know the government offers a good round sum for his capture.

"I know him well—much better than I do you—and I believe that we can take him. He was let off easy by the government after his other trouble, and it is natural that he should have confidence that he might obtain mercy again, especially when his execution would stir up all the bad blood in the northwest, just when the government has about got the thing squelched. If you want to try the plan we will do so and divide the reward for his capture evenly between us. If you don't care to do this I'll try it alone."

"Yes; I'll go, of course—and thank you for sharing the chance, which you might have kept to yourself, with me," eagerly replied Rodney.

"Oh that's nothing. I like your grit; and besides, I'd rather have you with me than to try it alone. If he should make a fight it might come handy to have a friend along, you know! Now we'll fall in at the rear to-morrow morning, and when we get to the right cross trail we'll branch off and go it alone."

In reply to Gilroy's inquiries, after returning to the tent, Rodney said:

"I haven't been able to get even a general idea of Riel's hiding place yet; but I suppose that I can't do better than to keep close to young Houri."

"No; that's right. Stick as tight to him as you

can without exciting his suspicion," replied Gilroy. "But I believe I've struck a lead, for I overheard Houri's father telling Major Bolton that he knew the general locality in which Riel is skulking, so I'm going to follow them. Between us both we ought to be in at the final wound-up. If it should fall to your luck don't miss a word, look or gesture, for I want to give a minute description of everything attending the capture."

Thoughts of the possibilities of the morrow did not allow Rodney to sleep but little that night. If they might only succeed in capturing the famous Rebel and secure the reward! He thought of all the comforts that it would secure to his mother and himself, and even began to plan just how he would spend it. But the honor which would attend such a feat could scarcely be less a consideration in the thought of a courageous, imaginative and adventure-loving frontier lad than the liberal financial reward.

He contrived to secure an extra feed for Pink-eye that morning and also gave his rifle and revolvers a cleaning of unusual thoroughness.

When the march began he found Houri, faithful to his word, at the foot of the column.

All the forenoon they rode side by side with the exchange of scarcely a word.

But when the halt was made for dinner, Houri pointed to a trail which crossed the one which the troops were following.

"That's it," he whispered, "but we must not strike out until the others take up the march, for it would

be too noticeable and we might have the whole bunch of them at our heels."

Rodney endeavored to conceal his excitement, during the noon meal, as much as possible; but was oppressed with the fear that he had succeeded but poorly.

At last the troops fell into line again and the young Half Breed and Rodney lagged behind for a little and then dashed rapidly over the prairie toward a cabin some two miles distant.

"He's in that shack; and if he's going to make any resistance he'll likely have the drop on one or the other of us. We might just as well make up our minds to that. The only thing we can do is to get a good ready, keep our eyes peeled and shoot quick, if it comes to that. There's no use trying to make a sneak on him."

Rodney had never felt his heart beat with such terrific blows as when they approached within a hundred yards of the cabin.

At first they could see no one within the cabin, but in a moment a dark and rather handsome man appeared.

"Hello, Louis!" gaily called Houri, divining, at a glance, that resistance was evidently not Riel's programme. "You're just the man I'm looking for. Better throw up the game and come along with us."

"Will you guarantee me a safe passage?" was the terse reply.

"Yes, we will deliver you to the authorities safe

and sound. You needn't worry about that. There will be no trouble, anyway. It will all be quiet."

A pity of the defeated and captured man crept into Rodney's heart as they rode to join the troops, and he could not bring himself to regard the quiet and dignified man as "an ambitious pretender and demagogue who had determined to win by the rifle and at the cost of the lives of those whom he could dupe, the power which he had failed to achieve in the halls of parliament."

Rodney could not reconcile this newspaper description of the Rebel leader with the actual man at his side; and at this feeling that the Half Breed chief was not so black as he had been painted intensified. Rodney's conscience began to accuse him for his part in the capture of the man. But he dismissed this disagreeable thought for the time, with the reflection that even though Riel should pay the death penalty for his act, his capture would probably put an end to the strife and be the means of stopping the waste of life which had been so revolting to him and to which he could not become hardened or indifferent.

As they approached the troops Houri requested Rodney to ride on in advance and report their capture to the general. Many curious eyes were turned upon him as he came forward and held a momentary conversation with the commander, who ordered an instant halt and took measures to receive the prisoner in a fitting manner.

It was with embarrassment amounting to almost

shame that Rodney received the hearty congratulations of Gilroy, Lieutenant Johns and all of the other officers and men who knew him. He tried to explain that he had done nothing at all; that Riel had simply surrendered and accompanied them back to camp.

"But it took grit to ride up to that cabin knowing that Louis Riel would have nine chances out of ten in getting the drop on you. If you didn't have to fight for your life it wasn't the fault of the chances you took," replied the lieutenant.

"Well," was Rodney's unspoken comment, "I'll have my share of the reward, anyway. And what a world of comforts that will buy for mother!"

That evening he wrote the good news to his mother, and also, with young Houri, made claim to the reward. As he finished his letter, it suddenly occurred to him that the capture of Riel practically ended the war. "What are we going to do now?" he asked Gilroy, with an abruptness which startled the correspondent out of a well-developed nap.

"Going?" repeated Gilroy, rubbing his eyes in confusion, "Oh yes! We're going on the trail of Big Bear. And a rocky road it'll be, too! But it'll be something new—a little different from what we've been having. Going through the thick timber, I imagine, will be the worst of it."

Rodney added this information to his letter and then sought his blanket, with that "good wholesome tired" which insured him sound and refreshing rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE TRAIL OF BIG BEAR.

IT was with a sense of deep relief that Rodney began the march from Garripy Crossing to Prince Albert.

"Somehow I feel as though I'd been just let out of school—as though we were through with the hard part of the business and the remainder of it would be more like traveling for the fun of it," Rodney confided to Gilroy.

"Well, I do think we've seen the hardest part of the fighting—but you must remember what I told Captain French that night before the taking of Batosch," replied Gilroy. He did not need to say anything more in order to emphasize the uncertainty of human calculations.

It was too grim a subject to be pursued further, and Rodney lapsed into gloomy silence which gradually changed into a dreamful enjoyment of the soft springtime world about him. The delicate silver birches with their white bodies wrapped in the flowing robes of their slender pendant whips of softest green stirred the poetry within the boy and brought back again to him the tender and worshipful feeling which he had so often experienced when alone in the woods, hunting or visiting his traps. This led to

thoughts of his mother and a sudden and almost overwhelming desire to see her. So strongly did this wish master him that he would have welcomed an opportunity to turn back toward the little cabin on the Qu'Appelle.

Then he began to formulate plans as to what he should do upon his return.

"Yes, sir! I'll stick to my original plan and take mother for a visit to her folks in Illinois. Then I'll get a foothold with some newspaper in Chicago if I can. But if I should fail in that I'll be contented for a time on some smaller paper—perhaps the one in town where they live. If mother gets homesick and wants to come back to the fort, of course I'll come to, but I shall try to get her to stay a year anyway," Rodney meditated.

He ventured to inquire of Gilroy about the Chicago newspapers.

"Equal to the Toronto and Montreal papers? Well I should say so—and way ahead of them, too! They've more nerve and push in a minute than the Canadian papers have in all day! If there's any country or part of a country in which the public is especially interested, the Chicago papers are right on hand to send out exploring expeditions, even at the cost of thousands of dollars. They have more dash and enterprise than the Canadian journals, which are patterned considerably after their staid conservative English cousins."

"How would anyone manage who wanted to get a start on one of those papers do—anyone—of—

my age, I mean?" bashfully stammered Rodney as they rode along side by side.

"They'd probably try—*and fail!*" was Gilroy's discouraging rejoinder.

After a few moments' reflection, he added:

"There are several ways in which young fellows get a start."

"But I suppose they all have to begin at the bottom?" interrupted Rodney.

"No; that's just where you and lots of others are mistaken. It's getting so now that one is almost as likely to begin in the middle, or even higher up. I suppose if one began strictly at the bottom, he would first be set to holding copy; that is, reading the manuscript in comparison with the proof. The next step would be the more unpleasant kinds of reporting. After that would follow the more desirable kinds of reporting, special writing, editorial work and editorial writing. If you started in holding copy, you would probably get *all* of six dollars a week—and pay out five of it for board, unless you got a cheap room and lived out. If you had a genius for economy, you might manage to cut that down a little; but it would be a tight squeeze at best," again explained Gilroy.

"But how could anyone begin in the middle, as you say?"

"Oh, in a dozen ways. Simply by being able to show himself capable of doing some special branch of work. This is usually begun by submitting special articles at space rate. For instance, you

choose your own subject—something on which you happen to be well posted and which is of general and timely interest—and write it up. If the editor accepts it, you will probably try another; and so on. If you can make a *go* of it, and have your 'stuff,' as they say, taken right along, then you may be hired on a salary, or a guaranty that a certain amount of your work will be used. Then you would be a special writer, which is about the next thing to being an editorial writer."

Although this information did not by any means satisfy Rodney and a score of other questions came up in his mind he feared that he might weary Gilroy and deferred them until another time. But the somewhat discouraging outlook which Gilroy had held up did not discourage him. It only aroused his determination the more.

After the journey from Garrepy Crossing to Prince Albert had been accomplished and they had reached the vicinity of Duck Lake where the Rebels had perpetrated their first massacre, the infantry troops took a steamer to Battleford, while the cavalry held across the "big bend" to the same destination. From this point they again took up their across-country march.

So uneventful was the journey that Gilroy began to chafe under its quite monotony.

"I declare this *is* stupid!" Gilroy reitterated as they marched on hour after hour with not even the promise of the smallest excitement or diversion.

Rodney, however, quite enjoyed the change from

the feverish excitement which he had been under ever since that first brush with the Half Breed scouts in the vicinity of Clark's Crossing. It gave him time "to do a little thinking," as he expressed it.

As they pitched camp one day in the vicinity of Ft. Pitt, where another massacre had occurred, Lieutenant Johns approached their tent with the exclamation:

"Heard the news, Gilroy?"

"No; What is it? Almost any excitement would be an improvement upon this dead calm."

"They say that Steele's scouts have encountered Big Bear and had a lively brush with his braves. The old chief has put out in the direction of the North pole and we are to follow post haste.

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Gilroy. "Anything to break up the monotony! And so we're to give the old rascal a lively chase, are we?"

"Well, I don't know how lively it will be, for it's going to be mighty hard work to push through the dense timber to which the Indians have taken. Of course they'll keep through the thickest of it, knowing that it will almost be impossible for troops to follow with any chance of overtaking them. But that's a great country up there, and worth one's while to see it," returned the lieutenant.

"Yes; and I'm not so sure about there being no chance of overtaking the redskins. If they are loaded down with their winter's catch of skins, they will not make such rapid progress themselves and

they will stop sooner than you think. I wouldn't be surprised if they went no further than those lakes up there."

"We're going to push right through, as far as there's any earthly use, for the government is bound to punish the Indians severely who have dipped into this muss," responded the lieutenant, as he took his leave.

"Of course," soliloquized Gilroy. "The Indians may *cache* their skins if they think they are getting hard pressed. But they'll hang onto 'em as long as they can. Tell you what, lad, wouldn't it be great luck to run onto that *cache* of skins? It would be the next best thing to your luck in helping to capture Riel. You're such a lucky dog that it would be just like you to fall right into that *cache* bodily. But if you should, I want to be in it with you," and Gilroy laughed generously at this seemingly envious speech.

Although Rodney had anticipated that the journey would be a difficult one, the actual progress which they made seemed unaccountably slow.

Much of the way they were obliged to wait for the axeman to cut down trees and remove logs from out the way.

It was in following this narrow trail that Rodney first discovered the antipathy in which the regular troops seemed to hold the scouts.

While going through the thickest portion of the timber the scouts were ordered to push on ahead of the regulars.

Whenever Rodney attempted to pass a regular, the latter would not yield Pink-eye a foot but would crowd the latter close against the trees.

The piebald animal endured this treatment—to which the horses of all the scouts were subjected—for a time in patience; but finally one trooper rather overdid the crowding and jammed Pink-eye against a rough tree-trunk in a way that aroused the ire of the pugnacious shaganappy.

The boisterous laugh of the trooper was suddenly nipped in the bud by the ferocious squeal of old Pink-eye, as he laid back his ragged ears and planting his teeth into the thigh of the offending horseman.

The latter plied a terrific blow upon the Roman nose of Rodney's pony but it did not save him from receiving scars which he would carry to his grave.

With an oath the trooper pulled out his revolver and would have shot down the horse had not Rodney grabbed the weapon and at the same time drawn his own.

"It was your own fault that my horse bit you. now take your punishment like a man," Rodney exclaimed, expecting that the man would break out into a fit of passion. But he seemed to regard Rodney's revolver with a wholesome awe.

Rodney appreciated that he was in a difficult position. He could not remain behind or ride beside the trooper, and if he passed on ahead it would give the fellow an opportunity to vent his

PINK-EYE'S REVENGE.

wrath in any way that he might choose. He determined to put a bold face on the matter and go ahead as though nothing had happened. Therefore he said nothing and pushed on.

Again the fellow crowded the shoulder of his horse against the flank of Pink-eye.

If Rodney had not been thoroughly alert, the consequences of this repetition of the troopers offense might have resulted as seriously for him as for the cavalry man, for Pink-eye took a quick step in advance and then dealt the trooper's horse a kick in the side which not only made havoc with the animal's ribs, but inflicted with the sharp "corks" of one shoe a savage gash into the flesh of the fellow's calf.

Rodney heard the cry of pain which the man uttered, but did not pause to investigate matters beyond a hasty glance, which showed him that the fellow still retained his seat in the saddle.

When he joined Gilroy in the advance and related the episode, the latter said:

"Served the wretch right; but you'd better keep a sharp eye on the fellow after this, for ten to one he'll try to have his revenge on you for the results of his own meanness."

"But I did nothing to him myself," answered Rodney.

"Of course! But don't you know that we hate those whom we have wronged worse than those who have wronged us? It's always that way. You'd better look out for him. I'll warrant he'll try to do up your horse."

"That would be meaner than trying to have his revenge on me directly," was Rodney's quiet reply, as he sought to stifle the anger that burned in him at the thought.

Although Rodney kept a careful watch upon the trooper and Old Pink-eye. he could find nothing to confirm Gilroy's unpleasant suspicions, until his fears gradually abated.

One evening camp was pitched on the spot where Old Bear and his followers had previously camped.

The recollection of the conversation about the rumored cache came to Rodney, and as there was a bright moon he determined to amuse himself by looking about for it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CACHE.

AFTER wandering about for some time, peering into every covert which seemed to suggest the possibility of affording concealment for the cache and poking under logs and brush-heaps, Rodney sat down, muttering:

"What's the use? I couldn't find it in broad daylight, and there's not the slightest use in attempting to now. I'd better go back to the tent." But as he sat there in the deep quiet of the great woods, with the soft moonlight filtering down through the tasseled branches of the pines, his thoughts drifted from the object which had brought him there into vague dreams of home, old playmates, the wonderful future and the wild majestic beauty of the northern forest. He wonderered, too, what had happened to the little Half Breed girl whom he had found on the shelf of rock near Fish Creek, and he tried, by shutting his eyes tightly, to recall the exact image of her face, which he remembered as very bright and pleasing, if not beautiful. How strange it would be if they should some time meet again in after life, and he should find her grown to a beautiful young woman and—!

His romance was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a light tread.

Instantly he was alert and listening intently, his fingers tightened about his rifle which had been resting loosely across his knees. The sound being in the direction opposite from the camp he naturally concluded that it was not caused by any of the soldiers or their stock, but by some wild animal. As the animal was to the windward from him he concluded that he was safe from detection, and that he might be able to obtain a shot at the unknown denizen of the woods if he did not alarm it by some noise. The tread seemed to continue for several yards and then pause. He listened more carefully than before, expecting that the animal had stopped to listen for signs of alarm and would resume its journey after a brief pause. But instead of again hearing its tread Rodney caught the sound of cautious scratching, as though the animal had discovered a hidden victim, which it could not reach without digging through leaves, brush and earth.

With slow and stealthy footsteps Rodney approached towards the author of the noise. He scarcely expected to get a fair view of the animal, although the timber was not as thick as he had anticipated. Step by step he picked his way along as "gingerly" as though returning from a truant's frolic and endeavoring to reach the safety of his bed without awakening the household.

Quite unexpectedly he soon found himself at the edge of a small clearing in the center of which stood the ruins of a deserted log cabin, probably erected years before by some trapper, or possibly by a band

of prospectors or surveyors. The roof was fallen in and the moonlight flooded the interior of its log walls almost as brightly as their exterior.

"That scratching comes from inside—there's no doubt about that! But the next thing is to steal a march on the animal without frightening it away," reflected Rodney, who would also have experienced a certain relief in knowing "the nature of the brute," which he was after before encountering it. Nevertheless he did not hesitate, but crept softly along, behind the low bushes which sprinkled the clearing toward a spot from which he could, through the doorway of the cabin, command a full view of the interior.

At first he could see only the "hind quarters" of the animal, which appeared to be about the size of a large dog, only not so tall.

"I wonder what the brute's after," thought Rodney as he shifted his position so as to obtain, if possible, a view of the animal's head. "Probably he's found the remains of an old barrel of salt pork—or has had a streak of luck and captured a larger victim than he could eat at once and has buried it there for safe keeping. But it's a queer place for an animal to *cache* anything."

These thoughts flashed through his mind as he raised his rifle, rested it over a stump, took deliberate aim and fired. Seeing that his shot had been instantly fatal, he ran quickly toward the cabin, but his mind was full of a new thought.

"Yes; it is a strange place for wild animals to *cache* anything—but quite a natural place for a

human being to select as a concealment for valuables."

Although he had never seen a live wolverine before, he had seen their pelts at the post, and knew that the dead animal was of this variety.

He did not pause, however, to make any extended examination of his prize. Pulling it hastily to one side he began an eager search of the stop where the animal had been digging.

It was in a corner of the cabin where the frame of a rude bunk still stood, filled with the debris of pine boughs, which, when fresh, had formed a soft and fragrant bed for the inhabitant of the cabin.

Rodney fell rapidly to work cleaning out this bunk, keeping a careful lookout for the first shining speck of fur that should confirm his suspicion that the cache was beneath. But no glimpse of this kind rewarded his efforts.

"I guess I'll poke around in there with a stick a little and then go home," thought Rodney, as he took up a pole and thrust it at random into the bunk.

"I declare it feels as though the bottom was laid with logs like a corduroy road!" he mentally exclaimed, as his stick reached the bottom.

He poked again and once more the point of his stick seemed to glance from a rounding surface and wedge itself between two pieces of timber. His curiosity was now thoroughly aroused and he began to throw out the debris with a will

As he expected, he found a corduroy bottom to

the bunk, and his heart beat quick with excitement as he pried the end of one of the small logs loose and lifted it up.

He could scarcely believe his eyes at the result; but a thrust of his stick against the substance beneath could leave no room for further doubt. He certainly *had* discovered the *cache* of Big Bear's winter catch of skins !

The other coverings were quickly lifted and revealed to Rodney a surface of otter, beaver, lynx, bear and fox skins.

As he continued to throw bundle after bundle of the rich pelts out of the secret vault in which Big Bear's squaws had buried them, he made a running count of their value, as he had often done in handling the skins for Leveque, at the Hudson Bay Post, at home.

But at last his arms began to tire, and he paused for rest.

"Well, I've taken out at least five hundred dollars' worth, and no signs of striking bottom yet!" was his mental comment.

It then occurred to him that he had been absent some time from camp, and that he must return or become an object of anxiety to Gilroy.

He had no difficulty in tracing his way back to camp, for the moon was still shining clearly, and he had been careful, in coming, to select certain prominent landmarks to serve him as sure guides in his return.

"Great Scotland! Lad, where have you been?"

was Gilroy's almost impatient greeting, as Rodney entered their tent.

"Oh, I've been hunting a little on my own hook."

"But I don't see any great amount of game," interrupted Gilroy.

"No—but I shot a wolverine, just the same! And that was not all that I bagged, either," was Rodney's mysterious reply.

Then he related his adventure and the discovery to which it had led.

"But what am I to do about it?" he inquired, after he had finished the narrative.

Gilroy remained silent for some time and then replied:

"That is something which you must decide for yourself. The skins belong to the Indians, but you may be sure that they will never have an opportunity to return and resurrect them. If the pelts were to remain, they would probably be destroyed by wolverines and other similar animals, as you have had proof to-night. If you were a regular soldier or scout, it would be your duty—in the theory at least—to report the find to your commander, and let him take possession of them as goods of the enemy. But you are not bound by this rule, for you are not even a regular scout, but simply a private person traveling with the army in a private capacity. I don't see why the skins don't belong to you more than to anyone else."

"But on that principle they belong to you, for I am working for you in even a stricter sense than any

soldier is working for his commander," replied Rodney.

"No, that principle don't hold in private business. It's your good luck, and I don't see any reason why you should not replace the skins as you found them, go on as though nothing had happened, and when the rebellion is over come back and get them. At any rate, I'd sleep over the business and decide it in the morning."

Rodney decided to act upon this last bit of advice, and stretched out upon his blanket.

But instead of "sleeping over it" he lay awake, hour after hour, debating the problem pro and con. One moment it seemed that this fortune was his by right of discovery. Then would come up the fact that they were not his—that he would be getting "something for nothing;" taking that for which he had rendered no equivalent. It was not, however, until he began to plan how he should dispose of the skins, provided he should follow Gilroy's suggestion, that the matter seemed to put itself in a decisive light.

"Suppose," he asked himself, "the trader to whom I might take the furs should ask me how I came by them. I could not tell him that I had either caught them or bought them."

This questionable view of the matter presented itself to Rodney each time he counted up the fortune which was within his easy grasp.

When he arose in the morning Gilroy greeted him with the question:

"Well, have you settled it?"

"Yes," was the prompt reply. "I thought that if I took the furs to a trader and he should ask me whether I had caught or bought them I could make no reasonable and honest answer. He would naturally think that I had got them by questionable means—and I think he would be about right, too. So I'm going to report it to the general and let him take possession of them."

"Yes—and distribute them among his relatives and pets," was Gilroy's ungracious rejoinder.

"That will be for him to settle. It seems the nearest right of anything that I should put it into his hands, so that's what I'm going to do this morning," was the boy's determined reply. He put this resolution into action as soon as breakfast was over.

After some delay he was admitted into the presence of the general, who received him in a brisk, short way, which would have quite disheartened the sensitive boy had he come to ask a favor instead of to do a duty.

After he had delivered his information the commander's manner mellowed perceptibly and he complimented Rodney upon the high sense of honor and integrity which he had shown. Then he called certain of his staff and requested Rodney to direct them to the cabin.

They found the pelts unmolested, and when they were all out Rodney estimated them to value at least one thousand dollars. But as he saw them

carried safely away to the general's tent he had no regrets for the decision he had made.

When he returned to Gilroy again the latter said:

"Rodney you won't mind my telling you that I have a very deep admiration for your action regarding the *cache*. It was something that not one man in a thousand would have done."

"It seemed the right thing to do, that was all," was Rodney's simple reply, as he went about his duties and tried to dismiss the subject from his mind.

"Well, I shall see to it that that lad has a chance to bring out all that there is in him and I believe that he will make a first-class newspaper man!" reflected Gilroy.

An hour later the march was resumed, and as they made their slow progress through the woods Rodney fell to wondering what adventure would next claim their attention.

"I declare it seems to me that I have lived years instead of about two months since we marched out of Ft. Qu'Appelle, that day," he remarked to Gilroy, who rode next him.

"You have, to all practical purposes, for it is experience, not years, that ages us."

"Do you really think that I have changed much since you first saw me?" eagerly inquired Rodney.

"Yes; very much—even in appearance. You were just a boy then—and a very shy and bashful one at that. Now you have the development resulting from an amount of hard worldly experience which few young men ten years your senior can boast of—

and it will all count for its full value in helping you along in the world, too. There's no profession in which an experience of this sort counts for so much as in the newspaper business," replied Gilroy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NIGHT ALARM.

THE progress of the troops grew rapidly more difficult and the services of the "cutters" were in constant demand.

"If we crawl along at this pace Big Bear will have about a thousand miles the start of us," was Lieutenant Johns' discouraged comment as he rode past Gilroy and Rodney.

"It does begin to look considerable like a wild goose chase, I must admit," replied Gilroy, whom any delay rendered decidedly restless.

But Rodney was enjoying it keenly. The fresh "springy" smell of the dense verdure charmed and soothed him after the wearing excitement of the scenes through which he had passed.

"I'd just like to leave off this hunting human game and take to fishing and hunting wild animals for a while. Wouldn't this be a glorious place to trap and hunt in, when the season is on, though!" exclaimed Rodney, his eyes blazing with enthusiasm.

"Yes; it would certainly be first rate. But when it comes to hunting, if I'm going in for it at all I want to go in all over, and not stop short of the Musk-ox region about Hudson Bay. There's the place to hunt—if the few travelers who have explored that region can be at all believed, and I

honkone who has been there who can be relied on. If I live long enough and don't get settled down to a desk before having my fill of roving, I'm going to spend a season knocking around up there."

"I suppose it's an awful hard life, at best, that one would lead there; but I can think of nothing more interesting. No books of adventure ever interested me half as much as those about the Arctic regions, and I think it is the same with other boys," said Rodney.

"Yes; I guess the preference is almost universal among boys. It was that way with me at least," replied Gilroy meditatively.

"What do you think is the reason for it?" resumed Rodney.

"Well, I don't know—unless it is because the most commonplace and insignificant details of existence are attended, by reason of the extreme cold, with great danger. Or, in other words, the natural and *inevitable* perils in such a climate are so thick that the narrator does not have to strain after perilous situations, and consequently his story is more vivid and realistic."

"That's a fact, but I never thought it out before. The adventures laid in the temperate and torrid zones always *did* seem more strained and far-fetched to me than narratives of Arctic exploration and adventure. But hunting even the musk-ox wouldn't quite satisfy me. It would take a real live polar bear to do that," replied Rodney.

"Well," laughed Gilroy, "when we make our

Artic exploration I'll see that a polar bear is provided for your express benefit, without regard to expense."

"All right, I'll not forget to remind you of it," promptly answered Rodney, joining in the laugh at the absurdity of the entire supposition.

The drift of the conversation was suddenly changed by the halting of the advanced horsemen, and Rodney's exclamation: "Look at that boy! What can we be coming to?"

"Muskegs—rat houses! And a sweet time we'll have getting across them, too!" explained Gilroy.

Subsequent events fully justified this view of the situation, for not only did every man have to dismount, but those having any considerable luggage were obliged to cut long poles and construct "travoils," upon which the baggage was dragged across the wide and treacherous swail, which was spotted with the "muskegs."

It was a tedious proceeding and one that all were delighted to have safely over.

When it was accomplished they found themselves on what was, save for the narrow strip or isthmus over which they had crossed, an island.

"Here we are at Loon Lake at last, and not a sight of an Indian for our pains," grumbled the lieutenant, "and what's more we're not likely to get one, either—for unless I miss my guess, the sly dogs' have been cunning enough to lead us on this island, just to cover up their tracks and give us the slip."

The island was a wild and beautiful place and Rodney was eager to explore it.

"Who knows what I may scare up?" he said to himself, as he took his rifle and set out alone.

At first he skirted along the shore admiring the beauty of the lake and watching for loons upon which to test his marksmanship. But not one was in sight, and although it was the proper hour for their "far-sounding" cries, he could hear only the gentle lapping of the water on its beach.

Tiring of this, he turned his face toward the timbered interior of the island and began to search for signs of an opening or trail. To his great surprise he found what seemed to be the faint trace of an old trail.

"I'd like to run across Big Bear's camp and pick up something that has been left behind, just to remember this trip by," he reflected, as he made a more careful examination of the trail and satisfied himself that the indications were certainly promising.

Sometimes the trail was quite apparent and at other times it was with the greatest difficulty that he could follow it. But patience and close attention enabled him to keep its general course; and when he entered the woods, and followed it for some fifty rods, he was surprised to find himself stumbling upon the ashes of Big Bear's extinct camp fires. He at once began to search about for some keepsake by which to remember their chase after the famous chief.

"Here I have it!" exclaimed Rodney, as he picked up the stone bowl of a discarded or forgotten pipe and put it into his pocket.

"I'd like to know in what direction they set out from here," he reflected, and began to search about for the continuance of the trail, which crossed an "open" and then disappeared into thick timber beyond.

He had but just reached the latter when the trail became so obscure that he was compelled to stoop close to the ground and exercise all the woods-craft of which he was capable in order to keep the run of it.

After progressing for some time in this slow and difficult position he paused and straightened up to relieve his aching back.

A cry of horror broke from his lips as he did so and he started back in terror; but after retreating a rod or two he regained control of his faculties and checked the impulse of fear to which he had temporarily yielded.

Not a yard in front of the spot where he had stopped was the most hideous and revolting sight that he had ever looked upon. It was the lifeless body of a grizzled old squaw, depending by a lariat from the branch of a tree. This scene needed no explanation. Rodney understood it instantly. The other Indians, being hard pressed, had left this decrepit old woman, who could not keep up the speed at which they wished to travel, on the island to starve. She had preferred the quicker death by hanging and had been her own executioner.

So strong a hold did this pitiful tragedy take upon Rodney that he involuntarily sank down upon a log to think about it.

Here was a feature of the war that he had not taken into consideration. At first the cruelty of the Indians to the old woman seemed awful and filled him with an indignation that would have welcomed an opportunity to avenge itself upon Big Bear and his warriors; but as he thought the matter over more calmly it came to seem that the responsibility for this cruelty lay as much with those who had crowded the Indians into a position where such a proceeding was but the natural outcome of their savage instincts and training, as with the Indians themselves. But the most vivid impression which it made upon the sensitive mind of the boy was to intensify the feeling to which every engagement that he had witnessed had contributed: that war was so terrible a thing, and caused the innocent, as well as the guilty, so much suffering that it was always wrong and unjustifiable.

The cry of a great black woodpecker startled Rodney from his reverie and he hastened back to camp to relate his discovery to Gilroy.

"Yes; you're *right;* it will work up into a good incident for the papers. It's just the kind of thing they want—something to harrow up the feelings of their readers, that's all that's necessary. Oh, you're getting your newspaper eyes open in good shape, boy!" exclaimed Gilroy, with patronizing enthusiasm as he listened to Rodney's graphic description

CAMP SCENE ON THE TRAIL OF BIG BEAR.

of the appearance of the suicide and his feelings as he had stumbled upon it.

The story was overheard by a scout, and as Rodney went to lead Gilroy to the spot nearly the entire company followed him.

"We'll let it hang just as it is, so that if Big Bear should happen back this way he may see the result of his devilish cruelty," remarked the commander as they turned away from the fearful spectacle and strolled back to camp.

"Look here, boys!" exclaimed one of the scouts who had been an old hunter and trapper, "we'll have smoke to-night, sure! This is wild tea, and it's the next best thing to the genuine article— which is *mighty scarce* in *this* camp so far as I know!"

The men fell to stripping the leaves from the wild tea plants and did not return to camp until their pockets were well filled. Nearly every fire that evening had a rude rack of some sort erected over it on which the leaves were spread to cure. Those who were fortunate enough to find a few leaves which had withered and dried in the sun, indulged their appetite without delay. This seemed to revive a general spirit of companionship and every man who had a story of Indian adventure told it to his fellows with a fresh gest.

When Rodney fell asleep it was to dream of a strange jumble of his own experience, and the exciting perils which he had just heard rehearsed.

He was in the midst of these imaginary dangers when the sharp report of a firearm aroused him. He

leaped to his feet in time to hear several successive discharges, following in rapid succession.

"Indians! The Indians are on us!" he shouted in wild confusion, scarcely knowing what he said.

Seizing his rifle he rushed in the direction from which the shots seemed to come. In this move he was followed by the scouts.

He was not yet thoroughly awake and his real surroundings were inextricably confused with the imaginary scene of his dream.

The dim outlines of a figure leaping through the brush immediately assumed the appearance of an Indian, and he instantly raised his rifle to fire.

Just as he was about to press the trigger a strong hand struck down the barrel of his rifle, which discharged harmlessly into the ground.

"Not so fast, boy!" sternly commanded a voice at his side, which he recognized as belonging to Lieutenant Johns. This and a chorus of laughs near by brought the bewildered lad to his senses.

"That's no Indian," continued the lieutenant.

The shout of "false alarm!" was then heard, and they hastened to join the increasing group about the nearest camp fire of the troopers. The men were all laughing heartily. Rodney and the lieutenant joined this merriment when they heard the explanation of the alarm.

The trooper who had previously suffered merited punishment at the heels of Old Pink-eye, had stooped over the camp fire to light his pipe with a brand. The pipe had slipped from his lips and fallen into

the fire from which the fellow had stupidly attempted to hook it with the butt of his revolver, which the scorching heat forced him to drop. At this he had fled into the brush while the discharging fire-arm scattered the embers and aroused the camp.

After the fun over the ludicrous affair had subsided, Rodney returned to his blanket, devoutly thankful that the lucky stroke of the lieutenant's had spared him the likelihood of turning the amusing episode into a painful tragedy.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN.

ALTHOUGH Rodney had succeeded in locating the site of Big Bear's camp on the island, the most diligent search on the part of experienced scouts failed to discover the course by which the wily chief had conducted his band in their departure. Several days were consumed in this fruitless search, and during this time Rodney found excellent rifle practice in shooting at the loons, which frequented the distant end of the island.

As he returned from one of these excursions Gilroy greeted him with the exclamation:

"Hurrah for home! The general has given orders to pull up in the morning and retrace our steps to civilization. That means that the chase after Big Bear is abandoned, and that the scouts will disband as soon as they reach home.

In other words the jig's up, and there will be nothing more for you to do excepting to draw your pay—which I will give you when we get to Prince Albert, for when we were there I sent an estimate of the amount of money which I wanted the paper to forward there for my use when we returned. Of course it will cover your time until you are back in Ft. Qu'Appelle again."

Rodney made no attempt to conceal his joy at the news that the wretched war was over and that he was soon to see his mother and the old home again. He was heartily sick of bloodshed, and while it gave him a glow of pride and satisfaction to count up the snug sum of money which he had earned, he had no desire to increase it at the price of the continuance of the rebellion. Then the thought that he was soon to see his mother filled him with a yearning impatience which could not tolerate the slightest delay. He planned to surprise her and wondered just what he would find her doing and what she would say to him and to the little fortune that he would carry home with him. He would first lay out upon the table the money from Gilroy. Then, after she had looked at that for a while, he would take out his portion of the reward for the capture of Riel.

"How much do you make it—that I will have coming to me?" Rodney ventured to ask Gilroy.

"Two hundred and seventy-eight dollars. Why? Isn't that the way you figure it?"

"I didn't make it quite as much as that," replied Rodney. "Well I think you'll find that right. I tried to allow a safe margin of time for you to get home in; and if you should happen to make it in less don't send any of the pay back. It would be just like you to, though," laughed Gilroy.

The march back to Prince Albert was quite as deliberate as the advance over the same trail, notwithstanding the fact that the way was now clear,

through the timber, for them. There was no necessity for haste, as in the advance, and the animals were wasted by short rations of feed and by hard work.

But at last they came in sight of Prince Albert and Rodney and Gilroy hastened to the bank where they found the remittance awaiting them.

No danger which the pioneer boy had been through had filled him with greater conscious excitement or given him quite the sense of manly importance that he felt as he counted over the gold and silver coin which Gilroy shoved toward him, on the outer ledge of the bank counter. His first attempt to count it correctly ended in a confused failure; but another trial verified the accuracy of Gilroy's count.

The cashier handed them each an empty coin bag into which they put specie.

"Now, Rodney, let's step into a store and get a good buckskin money-belt that you can wear under your clothes. Then you'll be all right," suggested Gilroy.

They started out of the door when the cashier called them back and said:

"We've received from the government, seven hundred and fifty dollars for a scout named Rodney Merton. It's half of the reward for the capture of Riel. I thought I heard one of you speak the name Rodney just now?"

"Well that's luck!" exclaimed Gilroy. "This lad is Rodney Merton, who, with young Houri, captured Riel. I don't call him by his name once in a

hundred times and don't know what possessed me to just now."

Rodney's identification being thus satisfactorily established by Gilroy, the cashier paid over the reward to the delighted and astonished boy, who had never "handled" as much money before in all his life.

"You stay here while I go out and get the belt. It won't do for you to show up all that money in any store," said Gilroy, who soon returned.

The cashier opened, from within, a door into a private apartment, where Rodney and Gilroy repaired to fill the money-belt and adjust it securely under his clothing.

As Rodney went to feed and water Old Pink-eye that evening, it occurred to him for the first time that the faithful old animal belonged to Gilroy and that on the morrow they would probably part company forever.

"Yes and my saddle, rifle and revolvers all belong to him, too."

"It makes me sick to think of giving them all up; they 've come to seem like a part of myself. But I could stand letting all go, but Old Pink-eye—he 's like an old friend that's stood by in many a time of need," mused Rodney, as he stroked the shaganappy's V-shaped neck.

"Well; I suppose I'll get passage over the trail to-morrow with some teamsters going home," said he to Gilroy, after supper.

"Not to speak of!" exclaimed Gilroy in aston-

ishment — "not unless you'd rather do that than to ride Old Pink-eye!"

"But the horse belongs to you and so do the revolvers and rifle and saddle," said Rodney.

"Boy, you've earned your outfit, by what might be called extra usefulness, many times over. But do you suppose that I could ever take from you the horse and rifle with which you saved my own life? Not much! They're yours, and I wish I could throw in a farm or two with them; but I can't. However, I don't propose to lose sight of you, and you may depend upon hearing from me as soon as I can find a good opening of some kind for you."

Rodney attempted to express his gratitude both for the gifts and the promise of future assistance, but the genial, big-hearted newspaper man would not listen to anything of the kind.

When it came, in the morning, to the actual moment of saying good-bye to Gilroy, the lieutenant and the other scouts with whom he had happened to become most intimate, he was far more deeply affected than he had anticipated, and a swelling lump arose in his throat which required constant swallowing "to keep down."

"I shall see you again before long—but here's good-bye 'till I do," exclaimed Gilroy, with a warm pressure of the lad's hand; "and if you should want to write me for anything, here's my address," he added.

Rodney's homeward journey was not only full of the delights of anticipation but of recollection as

well, for his route was over the same road by which he had come.

At Fish Creek he could not refrain from visiting the cabin where he had found the mother of the little Half-Breed girl, and was surprised to learn from the mistress of the cabin that the mother had taken her children to Ft. Qu 'Appelle, where they had relatives. He spent much time in wondering who the relatives could be and if the child would ever play as important a part in his life as he had in hers. As he passed the bog in which Gilroy had so ignominiously floundered on the occasion of their foraging expedition he could not repress a hearty laugh at the recollection of the ludicrous spectacle which they had both presented, and this was brought even more vividly before him when the dog which had given them such an exciting chase rushed out and barked fiercely at the heels of Old Pink-eye.

After leaving Clark's Crossing it seemed to Rodney that he was "almost home," and his heart leaped with pride and gratitude to think how different wa his present home-coming from the one — seemingly years, but in reality not four months ago —when he had tramped over the road from Grenfell, tired, discouraged and ashamed.

Although he now, as then, wished that he might pass through the village to his mother's cabin without being seen by the loafers about the post and shop, how different was the motive which prompted the wish!

On approaching the post he put spurs to Pink-

eye and cantered rapidly by, nodding hurriedly to those who called out to him from the steps and doors as he passed.

He did not slacken his horse's pace until in front of his mother's cabin. Leaping from the saddle, he rushed into the house.

"Rodney!" exclaimed his mother, lifting her hands, sprinkled with flour, from the bread which she was kneading. She threw her arms about him, and when she unclasped them there were tears in her eyes as well as in his.

"Deary-me! Just see how I've covered you with flour," she continued; and the little laugh at his dusty appearance relieved the embarrassment and gave them an opportunity to recover their usual composure.

"Well, mother, I'm back again all right, and here's what I have to show for it," said Rodney proudly, as he unfastened his bulging money-belt, drew it from under his clothes, and arranged the coin upon the table. "There's just a hundred dollars in each pile excepting the little one of twenty-eight dollars. Just think of it! *One thousand and twenty-eight dollars* in three months!

Mrs. Merton gazed at the shining piles of gold eagles for some time, as though unable to comprehend the value of so much money, to say nothing of realizing the fact that it was their own.

But at last when she began to grasp the reality, she buried her face in her hands and wept as he had seen her weep but few times before.

"Don't cry, mother," he said, laying his hand tenderly on her soft, brown hair. "It's all yours—every dollar of it; only I want you to use part of it in going to visit your folks in the States this winter. There will be plenty left for that after paying for the place."

She made no reply; but Rodney could see that she did not—as he feared she might—at once reject the proposition of the visit to Illinois.

After he had replaced the money in the belt and secured it about him, he took his mother to the door to exhibit Old Pink-eye, the rifle, revolvers and the saddle which Gilroy had given him.

"And he's going to get me a good place on a newspaper, too," observed Rodney, after expatiating upon the merits of Gilroy and his gifts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INDEPENDENT VENTURE.

"WHERE had we better keep the money, mother?" was the perplexing question which Rodney raised after tethering old Pink-eye out to graze.

"Mercy on us—I don't know! There's no bank here and I'd be afraid to hide it for fear some one would see you and go and get it."

"I've been thinking about that. How would it do to give it to 'Two-Cent Tranquility' for safe-keeping."

"That's just right!" promptly replied Mrs. Merton. "He's as honest as the day is long and as cautious and cunning as a weasel. I'd rather trust it with him than to try to keep it ourselves."

And so Rodney ate an early supper and went down to his old friend's shop, hoping to find him alone. But in this he was disappointed, for a young lumberman was waiting for a boot to be repaired and before this was done one after another of the village loafers began to drop in, eager to hear the news "from the seat of war." Rodney, however, knew that if he once began to relate incidents of the war, an epidemic of story-telling would set in and he would have no chance for a private audience with the shoemaker before midnight. He gave as brief answers as possible to their questions and

maintained strict silence when not compelled to speak.

This unresponsive course had its desired effect and when the last of his questioners took leave it was not quite nine o'clock by the shoemaker's round bull's-eye watch, which had ticked away above the bench as long as Rodney could remember.

"Now give us a little account of yourself," said the old shoemaker, as he tied up his leather apron and put it away in the bench drawer, from which he took his pipe and a package of tobacco, preparatory to giving the anticipated narrative his sympathetic attention.

When Rodney had concluded a hasty account of his adventures the old man reached forward his right hand, tapped the end of his fingers lightly upon the boy's knee and exclaimed:

"Boy, you've done well. Your own father couldn't have done better! Now, how much have you saved and what are you going to do with it?"

"Just one thousand and twenty-eight dollars, and I am going to pay for the place and give the rest to you to keep for me until mother goes back to Illinois to visit her folks. But I'd like to have you take it all now, for mother thinks it would be much safer with you than with us."

The old man, flattered by this confidence, gladly accepted the responsibility and took the belt; but insisted upon giving Rodney his written receipt for the money.

On the following day Rodney, accompanied by

Toussaint Tranquilite, visited the government land agent, paid the three hundred dollars demanded for a clear patent of title to the farm, and returned with the precious document in Rodney's pocket.

He at once presented it to his mother, who took it in her trembling hands, as the tears gathered in her eyes, and slowly read every word of it.

"Just think how long *he* worked for it—and then never got! It takes away the biggest part of the comfort to think that *he* can't be here to have it himself."

"But then, father's pleasure in owning the home would have been in the thought that you and I would have it 'to fall back on'—as he used to say; and so long as we have it now I'm sure he would want us to be very happy in it," cheerfully observed Rodney.

"Yes, I suppose that's so," assented Mrs. Merton with a readiness quite unlike the habitual gloom with which she had come to receive the few encouraging things which had entered into her life, in later years. This symptom of increasing hopefulness was more welcome to Rodney than the most flattering prospect of any personal success and he felt like exclaiming:

"Oh, mother, I'm going to make you grow young again, yet!"

For several days Rodney busied himself in constructing a snug stable for old Pink-eye and "fixing things up generally" about the place. There was a comforting sense of proprietorship in doing this

which gave him a far greater pleasure than he had ever derived in making any previous improvements. He had never been happier before and he sang and whistled constantly as he plied his hammer and saw.

But although his hands were busily employed in this work his thoughts were equally busy planning his future.

At first he thought that he would at once write to Gilroy asking his assistance in securing a position upon the Montreal paper. But here his manly independence asserted itself.

"No, sir! I'll get one myself. I've received enough favors from him already. If he should write to me offering me a place, *that* would be different; but I'll try faithfully alone first. If I fail, it will be time enough to call on him then," he exclaimed, with the enthusiasm of strong conviction.

How to begin this struggle for a footing was the next question, and a difficult one, too. Upon careful reflection he decided that the best way was to purchase several of the leading Dominion papers and write to the publishers stating his experience in the rebellion, referring them to Gilroy, and requesting a trial in case there was any chance for him.

The next out-going post carried nearly a dozen carefully-worded applications to the principal papers of Winnepeg, Ottawa, Toronto, Quebec and Montreal.

In spite of the fact that he told himself that he could not expect an answer from even the nearest

one inside of ten days, a week found him an anxious watcher of every in-coming post.

But, although this anxiety daily increased until it amounted to nervous restlessness, he did not receive a reply until three full weeks had elapsed. The others followed in succession, until the list was complete. They were all of the same sort, politely declining his services.

He had faced death beside Gilroy and beside Captain French with soldierly nonchalance and bravery, but he could not face that pile of letters without something very like tears coming into his eyes.

It was only after days of sharp contest with his pride and independence that he could bring himself to the distasteful expedient of writing to Gilroy, from whom he considered that he had already received so much assistance. Nor did the thought of the service which he had happened to render Gilroy at Fish Creek, help the matter any. On the contrary it made him feel all the more unwilling to appeal to Gilroy.

"But it must be done—there doesn't seem to be any other way out of it but this," was his reluctant conclusion, and he therefore wrote to the correspondent detailing his attempt and failure to obtain, through his own exertions, a position. He directed the letter carefully to the address which Gilroy had given him and dropped it into the post with the comfortable assurance that this, at least, would bring some kind of success.

"I'll not count on getting an answer from this until *three* weeks," he said to himself. When that period had passed without bringing a word from Gilroy his expectancy alternated between the keenest despondency and the liveliest fears; but the former steadily gained the ascendancy with each passing day.

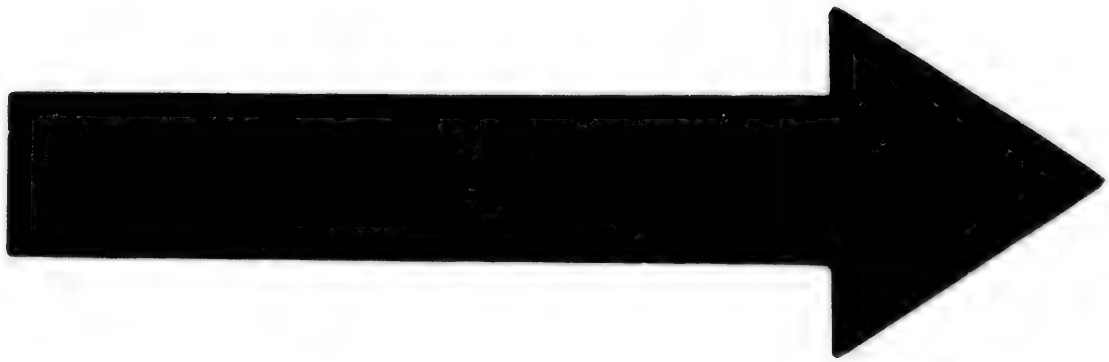
When he could no longer invent any plausible explanation for the failure other than Gilroy's permanent absence, unaccountable indifference or death, Rodney gave up all hope in that direction and again turned his thoughts upon his own resources.

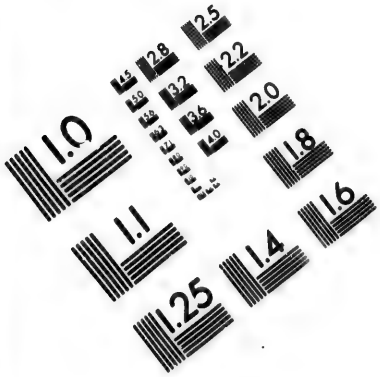
His first move was to urge upon his mother the desirability of starting upon their visit to Illinois before the cold weather should begin. She consented more readily than he had anticipated and before the first frost whitened the ground about Ft. Qu' Appelle they were on their way to Chicago, where "Uncle Rob" was to meet them on one of the frequent trips to the city, which he was obliged to make in pursuit of his vocation of drover or "stock buyer."

Rodney would have been ashamed to confess how wonderful the beginning of that first ride upon a railway train seemed to him; but when the train at last came to its final halt in the Union depot in Chicago, he confidentially remarked to his mother:

"It seems as though we had always lived on the cars—don't it, mother?"

"Yes; and it don't seem as though this awful





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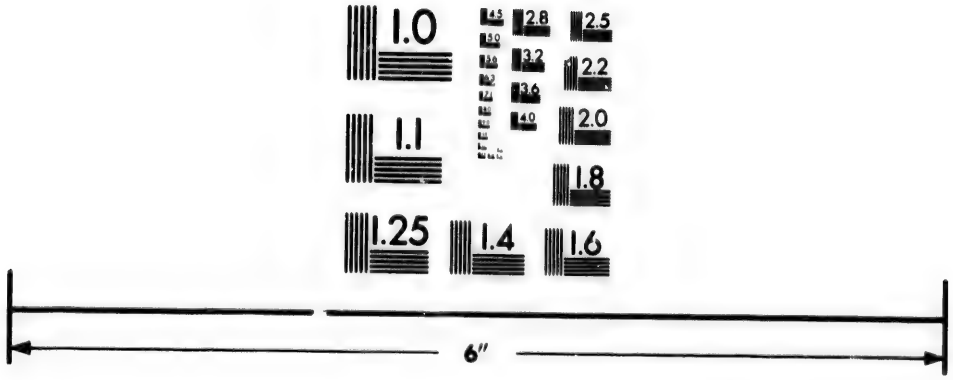

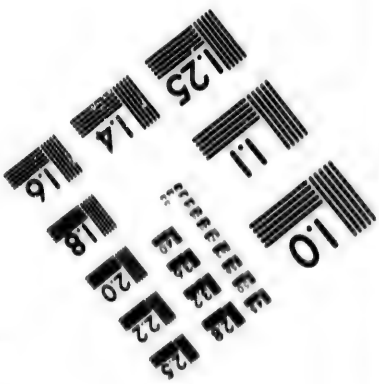

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rumble and clack-a-ty-clack would ever get out of my head and ears," replied Mrs. Merton.

They found Uncle Bob awaiting them inside the gate. He was a jolly, hearty man, who laughed loudly on every occasion which offered the slightest pretext for merriment.

"Well, boy, now for the hotel and a good square meal! Then, after your ma and I've had a little visit, we'll go out and take in the sights."

"All right, Uncle Bob. If you don't mind I'd rather see the newspaper offices than anything else. Have you ever been in them?"

"Never. But I can't go younger than to-night. So we'll manage it some way."

The second-class hotel at which the drover stopped seemed a marvel of magnificence to Mrs. Merton and Rodney.

By the time dinner was over and Mrs. Merton and her brother had finished their visit in the hotel parlor, it was five o'clock.

"Now's a good time to go round by the newspaper offices on Fifth Avenue and see the boys hustling out the evening papers."

It was a strange and interesting sight to Rodney to watch the ragged array of newsboys in front of each of the evening paper offices, their arms piled with the damp papers fresh from the great perfecting presses which were thundering away in the basement below.

He forced his way through the motley crowd of urchins, who were laughing, quarreling, singing and

fighting, close up to one of the basement windows through which he could obtain a view of the presses. There was something tremendously thrilling and almost supernatural to Rodney in the great whirling cylinders, the seemingly endless roll of "white paper" which unwound itself into printed and folded sheets at the other end of the presses.

"I suppose its too late for me to try to get a place to-day, don't you?" he inquired of his uncle.

"Yes; we would'nt have time. Our train goes out at seven o'clock and we will have to eat supper in the meantime. But you can come in most any time, for I live only fifty miles out and have to come in every week with cars of stock. I can get you a pass to come in on whenever you want one."

Rodney then bought an assortment of the papers and they started back for their hotel.

Had Rodney been less absorbed in examining the papers he could not have escaped from noticing the sensation that his leather-bound white felt hat and Northwestern breeches, which fitted his legs tightly and buttoned at the knees, created among the newsboys and the passers; but his pre-occupation spared him this annoyance.

After another hearty meal in the hotel, they again took the cars and arrived at the little country town, in which Uncle Bob's cosy home was situated, a little before nine in the evening.

Rodney's dread of meeting the remainder of the family vanished as soon as he heard the kindly

voice of Aunt Susan, and saw the round, merry faces of his cousins, May and Frank.

The two boys soon retired to the room which they were to share during Rodney's visit; but it was dangerously near midnight when Frank exacted the last narrative of Rodney's experiences in the rebellion from the young newspaper scout, who was henceforth to be a veritable hero in the eyes of Frank and the other village boys of his "set."

Rodney's first request, on the following morning, when Frank volunteered to show him the town, was to be taken to the office of the local paper.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SMALL FOOTING.

"I KNOW 'Corkey' Simpson who sets type on the *Record*," explained Frank, as the two boys walked down the village street. "And he'll show us all there is to see in the office. He writes most of the locals himself and a good many of the town folks believe that he is the local correspondent of the Chicago papers."

"Do you think that we could get him to tell us that? You see I want to get a letter of introduction to some of the Chicago editors and he'd be just the one to get it from if we could manage it," said Rodney.

"I'll try, anyway," answered Frank, who was greatly flattered at the prospect of being of any assistance to so heroic a personage as Rodney.

They climbed a dark and dirty stairway and found themselves in a big room, which looked bare and empty in spite of the type cases, imposing tables, presses and type galleys with which it was cluttered.

"Corkey," who was the only inhabitant of the place, slipped from the high stool upon which he was setting, clapped a slug into his composing stick to hold the unfinished line of type in place, and hobbled

forward to welcome his visitors. At every step his cork leg gave an audible squeak which revealed to Rodney the probable derivation of the fellows curious nickname.

After introductions were over it did not take Frank long to hint at the distinguished nature of their guest, and the conference ended by Corkey's taking them bodily into his confidence and not only revealing the fact that he was, as Frank had surmised, the local correspondent of the city dailies, but he volunteered his services in any capacity that might serve Rodney's pleasure.

The remainder of their visit was spent in examining the mechanical appliances used in the making of the country weekly.

"You see," explained Corkey, we only set up the local news and advertisements here. The remainder of the paper is printed in Chicago, by a 'ready-print' or 'patent-inside' house. That part of it contains the general news of the day, the 'Agricultural' and 'Home' departments. I tell you they have an immense establishment in there at the American Newspaper Union; that's where we buy our patent inside. They print or furnish plates to about three thousand local dailies and weeklies."

This was an interesting feature in the production of a weekly paper, of which Rodney had been entirely ignorant. It set him to thinking.

"If I fail to get any place on one of the big dailies I will try one of those 'patent-inside' houses," he resolved.

Armed with a letter to the editor of each of the Chicago papers, for which Corkey was local correspondent, Rodney again accompanied his uncle to the big city.

A ride up a creaking and hitching elevator, which made him feel painfully unsteady, landed him on the top floor of the first newspaper office on his list.

"Managing editor second doo' to de left!" called the colored elevator boy, as he shut the grated door of the elevator sharply behind Rodney.

A stern, bald-headed man sat at a large flat desk in the center of the room, opening and reading a batch of telegrams. At his left, in the corner, a younger man clicking the typewriter.

Rodney's heart beat with terrific violence as he stood, with his scout's hat in hand, waiting for the editor to look up.

The latter seemed entirely oblivious to the boy's presence until the last telegram had been read and tossed into a flat wire basket.

Then the man looked up and said:

"Well, what is it?" with a sharpness which startled Rodney and seemed to imply that it was he and not the boy who had been kept waiting until patience had nearly ceased to be a virtue.

Rodney could not, on the spur of the instant, summon an answer, but simply handed the editor Corkey's letter of introduction.

"Go to the city editor, next door," was the only reply which the editor made as he handed back the

letter and wheeled about, in his swivel chair, to speak to the stenographer.

With this blunt dismissal Rodney entered the city editor's room.

The desk at which that dignitary sat smoking a cob pipe while holding a telephone receiver to his ear was partitioned off from the front of the room by a low railing. At his back were several plain pine tables littered with small sheets of white print paper.

When the man had shouted "All right—so long!" into the telephone, and turned his keen gray eyes upon Rodney, the letter was again passed from the boy's hand. In a voice slightly "shaky" with excitement Rodney stammered:

"I've been all through the Riel Rebellion as assistant to the correspondent of the *London Illustrated news* and one of the Montreal papers, and can refer you to him."

This seemed to slightly soften the severity with which he seemed about to dismiss the application.

"That's all right, but we're full. In fact, I've got to cut down the local staff."

It was with still greater trepidation that Rodney climbed several flights of stairs leading to the city editor's room of the next paper.

The first object which met his eye was a placard dangling from the editorial desk, on which was printed, in bold black letters, the announcement:

"NO VACANCIES."

He turned out of the room as quickly as he had

entered and went down the stairs with heavy and discouraged tread.

His subsequent calls were only variations of the same treatment, but he kept perseveringly to the end of the list.

It was time for his train home when he had made his last fruitless application, and he spent the whole homeward ride in gazing disconsolately out of the car window and reflecting bitterly upon his failure to receive a reply to his letter to Gilroy, which seemed to be the cause of all his later woes.

But this mood soon exhausted itself, and he thought of it as very childish and unreasonable.

In the morning he regained his old courage and resolution, and dropped in upon Corkey with a cheerful face, and laughingly related his experience of the previous day.

The editor of the *Record* was absent on a protracted fishing excursion, and Corkey was at liberty to entertain as many of his friends as possible so long as he got out the paper. Consequently Rodney tarried longer than usual, and made a searching examination of the "exchanges" and the office in general.

Among the exchanges he found a long open manila envelope containing printed matter.

"Those are sample sheets from the patent-inside house and you'll always find two or three *rattling* good stories and sketches in them. They run to adventures generally. Take 'em home with you and read 'em if you like," said Corkey, as he saw the envelope.

Rodney did so. The sketches seemed very direct and simple. They were marked "original" and therefore must have been purchased by the patent-inside house.

"Why there isn't half as much to that story as there was to the one that Col. Williams told that night by the camp fire at Loon Lake," thought Rodney. Suddenly the inspiration flashed upon him.

"I'll write out the colonels' adventure and offer it to them!"

Corkey furnished him with a quantity of neatly cut "copy-paper" and he sat down to work.

But he could not word the opening sentence to suit him. He wondered how adventure stories usually began. Another inspiration came to his assistance. Hurrying home to his uncle's he rapidly "went through" several months' numbers of the *Youth's Companion*, which Frank always kept neatly filed for re-reading, making a careful study of "the adventure page" in each number. When he had completed this investigation, he had gained a clear idea of the proper construction and essentials of a good adventure story.

Then he again went to the desk and wrote with a rapidity which surprised him, the story which had so interested him as it came from the lips of the scout.

Frank came in just as he finished the last page, to get him to go to the grove and gather some walnuts.

"Well, see what you think of this first and then

I'll go," was his reply, as Frank dropped into the nearest chair and Corkey left his stool and leaned against the corner of the desk, composing stick in hand, while Rodney read his first attempt at a story.

The exclamations of admiration which he received from his audience made Rodney feel not a little elated.

"To-morrow I'm going all over it again, carefully," said Rodney.

"And if you like I'll look out for the punctuation a little. That's very important, you know; a practical printer has to learn *that* carefully," suggested Corkey.

This suggestion was gratefully accepted and the manuscript was left with him, while Frank and Rodney finished the day by securing a fat bag of nuts and shooting several squirrels.

On the morrow Rodney again labored faithfully on his story, cutting it down to the exact length of the story in proof sheet and making various changes for its improvement.

"I wonder how it *would* look in print," he mused, as he made the last correction.

"I'll show you in about an hour," quietly responded Corkey. "It's short and I'm going to set it up and give you a good clean proof of it to take into the editor, instead of the written copy. It will be very much clearer."

The boys were delighted with the proof which Corkey presented to them, and in the morning Rod-

ney again boarded the cars with new courage and hope.

The editor received him with so much kindly consideration that Rodney ventured to at once make application for a "beginner's position," and presented the story as a sample of his work.

"Where did you pick up this incident?" inquired the editor.

"Around the camp fire, when we were on the island at Loon Lake."

Then the editor, by occasional questions, drew from Rodney an account of his experiences in the rebellion and also of his independent struggle to obtain a footing in the ranks of newspaper work.

"Well, I'll take this sketch and pay you seven dollars for it, and I'll give you a trial as copyholder, at six dollars a week to begin with, for the young fellow who has been with us in that capacity has just got a position as reporter on the *News*. It will just about pay your board; but perhaps you can occasionally chink in a sketch which will help you out with a little extra."

"At last!" was Rodney's inward exclamation of gratitude as he heard the words. He was almost surprised at his success, and was almost as overjoyed as when he had secured the position with Gilroy, at the old fort. He could scarcely wait to carry the good news to his mother and Frank and Corkey.

They rejoiced with him as only big-hearted boys can rejoice with an admired mate in a success to

which they felt that they had in some measure contributed.

Both were at the train, Monday morning, to "see him off" as he went to begin his first day's labor.

CHAPTER XX.

A GREAT TRIUMPH.

ALTHOUGH Rodney found the task of "holding copy," listening to the monotonous voice of the proofreader and keeping his mind concentrated upon the copy in hand, to see that it corresponded in every word and figure with the proof, a very exacting one, the work was quite as pleasant and agreeable as he had anticipated.

He soon grew accustomed to his surroundings and was welcomed in full and hearty fellowship by the members of the editorial staff, who, with the exception of the editor-in-chief, were young men.

During the noon hour, before and after lunch, Rodney fell naturally into the habit of drifting into the artists' room, where the younger men congregated. Story-telling was always the order of the hour, and as no silent partners were allowed he was forced to draw for his contribution to the impromptu social entertainment, upon his "roughing-it" experience in the rebellion, and it was plainly evident to Rodney that this experience increased the respect in which they held him as a member of the craft.

Keen and constant observation of all the details of the varied departments of the work which went on about him, and ultimately passed under his in the copy, was a broad education to Rodney, which he mastered with devouring eagerness.

His evenings were spent in the study of some subject which the work of the day suggested and the monthly sketch which he regularly submitted to the editor was not only as regularly accepted, but showed such marked improvement as to elicit words of praise from the young men who congregated in the artist's room.

"Why don't you try your hand at a special for one of the dailies? Or perhaps a sketch is more in your line. I know a dozen of the boys who make from ten to fifteen dollars a week out of their specials" suggested the editor of the "miscellany" department.

This suggestion was immediately acted upon by the preparation of an article upon "The Mounted Police of Canada," in which he drew his coloring from his own observation, the accounts which he had heard from the scouts, while he gathered the "solid facts and figures" from a perusal of English and Canadian journals, which he found by diligent search in the public libraries.

Good fortune rewarded his efforts where before he had failed, and the article was accepted. He was not a little surprised, when, after weeks of waiting, the article appeared in print with the "solid facts" upon which he had so largely relied for its success, largely expunged.

In this way the winter passed to February.

As the family sat about the pleasant base-burner in Uncle Bob's sitting-room, one Sunday evening, Mrs. Merton said:

"Rodney, I wish you could get something to do in the spring that would take you out of doors and give you the good healthful exercise that a boy needs and you have always had before."

"Yes," interrupted Uncle Bob, "I'm with you in that, Mary. It 's no good for boys the age of these two to be cooped up in a house or office, pouring over books and papers. Time enough for that after they are men. What they need is to have a little more roughing it."

"I was just thinking," said Rodney, "of the string of traps that I had out last winter, and how I would like to turn out early in the morning and 'make the rounds' of them once more. Looking at the snow on the branches of those pines out there by the gate makes me just hungry for a good long tramp on my *rachets*."

"And wouldn't I like to go with you, though!" seconded Frank, closing the copy of Ballantyne's "Young Fur Traders," from which he was reading.

"Say," he added, "to-morrow is Washington's birthday, and you don't have to go back to your work till Tuesday. Let's go out rabbit-shooting."

"All right. I'd forgotten that it was a holiday, but I remember now that the boys said so," responded Rodney.

When nuts, apples and books had been enjoyed through the long evening, the two boys went to their chamber to spend another hour in a secret conference upon the preparations for the morrow's hunt.

They awakened early, to find that a light snow

had fallen during the night, which would render the hunting prime.

Frank put his gun in order, and then they went together to borrow one for Rodney from a friend

After a hasty breakfast, foraged from the pantry, they set out with Uno, Frank's beagle hound, eager for the chase.

"Let's go first to the nursery, where the rabbits feed on the young seedlings," suggested Frank, leading the way.

This was in the edge of the village, and as they came in sight of it Rodney exclaimed :

"Gracious ! Just look at that; what a perfect network of tracks. This place must be fairly alive with them !"

Frank's answer was directed to Uno, who bounded in among the seedlings as soon as the words "Hunt 'em out" escaped Frank's lips.

A moment later Rodney exclaimed :

"There ! There !" and the reports of both their guns rang out upon the keen frosty air with a familiar shock which thrilled Rodney through and through.

"Number one for both of us !" said Frank, as each picked up the plump rabbit which his first shot had killed.

Their guns were kept warm by constant firing until the forenoon was well advanced, when Rodney remarked :

"You've bagged ten and I'm only one behind you. This is all we can possibly use in our family with a

good margin for Corkey and the friend from whom you borrowed the gun. I think it's a shame to kill more game than you can possibly make use of; don't you?"

"Yes, I do," replied Frank; "suppose we go back by the way of the postoffice and get the mail."

"I suppose you'd be just as anxious to appear on the main street if you had only your gun instead of such a fat string of rabbits to carry," laughingly responded Rodney.

"No, I'm *not* ashamed of that string and I don't care who sees it, either. But I do want to get the mail, too—honest Injun," replied Frank.

"Whew! Here's one for both of us!" exclaimed Frank, as he took a couple of letters from the postmaster's hand and passed one of them to Rodney.

As they passed out of the postoffice, Rodney exclaimed:

"Oh, Frank, just take my gun a minute! It's from Gilroy!"

They stood still upon the steps while Rodney tore open the envelope with eager and trembling fingers and read aloud:

"MR. RODNEY MERTON, Ft. Qu' Appelle, etc.

"*Dear Lad:* Awful sorry I didn't get your letter, but I've been 'outside the pale of civilization' ever since it was written, up to this date. But 'all's well that ends well,' and this ending I think will suit you, for I want you to come on at once to Montreal (check enclosed) and go with me on a newspaper exploration through the Hudson Bay county. Pay

"DEAR SIR—COME AT ONCE," ETC.

$200 per month and all expenses. Six in the party and all good fellows, too. So you see we'll hunt the musk-ox on his native heath, and perhaps the polar bear, too—for there is no telling how far north we may go. The expedition is splendidly equipped and has plenty of money behind it. Lose no time in reaching here at the earliest possible moment. If you know of a good straight lad about your age who has the right timber in him and is in for this kind of thing bring him along at half the pay I named for you. If you cannot come, telegraph, otherwise I shall expect you. Yours,

"GILROY."

The two boys looked into each other's faces and understood the "volumes" which they were unable to speak.

"Do you suppose they will let us?" was the tremendous problem which rose to their lips. But they did not speak it. Instead, Rodney exclaimed:

"Oh, wouldn't it be *too good for earth* if we could!"

Frank's only answer was a boyish—

"Whoop!" which passersby probably interpreted as irrepressible enthusiasm over his heavy string of rabbits.

That evening the family council assumed an unwonted seriousness and its members deliberated pro and con over the great question before them.

But good Uncle Bob brought matters to final close by saying:

"Well, Mary, I say let 'em go. No use in keeping them over the coals any longer. We might just

as well decide it right now and here; and for one, so far as Frank is concerned, I give my consent."

"Just as you think best, Robert," promptly acquiesced Frank's mother.

"Well, I think it will be better for Rodney than staying in an office," said Mrs. Merton.

And so the boys went to bed too happy to sleep or do anything but plan for the great expedition into the "Hudson Bay country."

Those who wish to follow the fortunes of Rodney and Frank and Gilroy in their Arctic explorations may do so in the volume—THE YOUNG EXPLORER.